

**Mobilising People in the *Việt bắc*: Posters, Folk Poetry
and Pamphlets in the War Against French Colonialism.**

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I declare that this thesis comprises only my own original written work. Full acknowledgement is given wherever the work of others is quoted.

Robert James Hurle

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Abstract

After the Second World War, many of the former European colonies in Southeast Asia aspired to independence. In Indochina the French resisted these movements even after independence was declared in Vietnam. The Vietnamese, led by the Viet Minh organisation, fought the first Indochina War against their former colonial masters using what resources were available to them, their opponent being an industrial power with vast wealth and military power. The chief resource available to the Viet Minh in their quest to reclaim independence was the people of Vietnam, particularly those who lived in the northern parts, the Viet Bac region. This thesis examines some of the methods used by the Viet Minh to marshal this vital resource. The techniques used by the Viet Minh leadership, and in particular Ho Chi Minh, to mobilise the people focussed closely on the folk traditions, such as poetry, visual imagery and the shared understanding of the history of the people that they wished to engage in the fight for independence. Ho Chi Minh wrote a history of Vietnam in a folk-poetic style and he started a newspaper for the largely illiterate rural population, both publications aimed at building a sense of community and common purpose. Posters were produced, which used the experiences and understanding of the farming communities to explain the issues that were involved in the fighting. Songs and booklets were all employed to engage villagers and intelligentsia alike, to mobilise a large part of the population to dislodge the well-armed adversary.

Preface

When I first started visiting Vietnam as a backpacker in 1991 I, in common with other visitors, was struck by the vitality, industry and inventiveness of the people I met. A year or so later, while working with engineers at the Institute of Information Technology on Vietnam's experimental Internet connection, I witnessed the same characteristics in play used to great effect to realise Vietnam's first successful connection with the Internet,¹ then just beginning an explosion into the public domain in my home country of Australia. Fortunately I had a chance to read some works related to the French colonial period,² particularly the period prior to the Second World War and I became puzzled by the contrasts between the accounts of the Vietnamese people then and what I had experienced in practical terms. Further reading introduced me to the Resistance Against the French (also called the First Indo-China War) and popular accounts of the battle at Điện Biên Phủ against the French.³ Many of the accounts of this battle concentrated on the military aspects but what was more interesting, in my opinion, was the way in which the people had apparently willingly exerted extreme efforts, in the face of very great danger to their own lives, to solve the supply problems on the Vietnamese side for the ultimate purpose of achieving independence for Vietnam. The fierce popular opposition to the French by the 1950s needed some explanation and the key seemed to be mobilisation of the Vietnamese people. Would such strong and dedicated resistance to colonial rule have been possible without good leadership and without winning the support of a large part of the populace? Thus, I came to study the mobilisation methods used by the leadership and the responses of the people, particularly in the mountainous northern part of Vietnam, the *Việt bắc* area.

¹ This connection to the Internet provided e-mail services to Research Institutes, Government Departments, Universities and the NGO community and was instituted through the Australian National University on one side and the Institute of Information Technology in Hanoi on the other. The e-mail service was officially inaugurated by exchange of e-mails between Prime Ministers Võ Văn Kiệt of Vietnam and Carl Bildt of Sweden in April 1994. I was the instigator of the project and the manager and engineer on the Australian side. The project was strongly supported by David Marr and Ben Kerkvliet of the Australian National University and partial funding was provided by the Australian Department of Education.

² Initially this was the account in David G. Marr. *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981, and later I was introduced to Neil L. Jamieson. *Understanding Vietnam*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

³ I was introduced to the Điện Biên Phủ battle through reading Robert J. O'Neill. *General Giap: Politician and Strategist*. North Melbourne: Curzon Australia Ltd, 1969, in particular, pp. 121-159.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Sources

At 17:00 on 13 March 1954, after a few weeks of sporadic firing and range-finding, the big artillery of the Việt Minh, hidden in the surrounding mountains, opened fire on the French fortress in the valley at Điện Biên Phủ in the rugged mountains of north-west Vietnam. The air strip, vital for supplying provisions, ammunition and reinforcements, was quickly destroyed and, over the next 55 days, the French positions were pounded by Việt Minh guns until finally, on 7 May, the fortifications fell and were over-run by Vietnamese infantry, who took any survivors, officers and soldiers, into captivity.¹ The victory came at an opportune time, just one day before the five-power Geneva conference was to begin discussing “the Indochina question”.²

As Bernard Fall points out, there were actually two interlocking and simultaneous battles involved at Điện Biên Phủ.³ The first was the siege of the French fortress where the Việt Minh, with more than 200 artillery pieces⁴ and 55,000 soldiers,⁵ had the advantage over the French, having only 60 big guns and 15,000 troops.⁶ However, the French forces were also supported by air power and 3,700 combat missions were flown against the Việt Minh positions, using bombs and napalm as the weapons.⁷

The other battle, which has more significance for this thesis, was the logistic battle, the battle to transport and supply the troops of both sides in a remote area. On the French side, 6,700 air missions were flown to bring in supplies and reinforcements in the period between 20 November 1953 and the fall of the fortress⁸ and, after the Việt Minh guns had rendered the airfield unusable, supplies and reinforcement troops were still sent to the

¹ Bernard B. Fall. *Hell in a Very Small Place: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu*. Philadelphia/New York: L. B. Lippincott Company, 1967, p. 410.

² Chen Jian. “China and the Indochina Settlement at the Geneva Conference of 1954”, Chapter 12, in *The First Vietnam War: Colonial Conflict and Cold War Crisis*, pp. 240-262, edited by Mark Atwood Lawrence and Fredrik Logevall. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007, p. 246.

³ See Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place*, p. 130. Fall notes three battles but the first that he considers had finished by December 1953.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 127.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 126.

⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 479-482.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 458.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 458.

base by parachute. The Việt Minh, before and during the siege, relied upon Russian-built Molotova trucks and captured American Dodge trucks to service those sections of the supply route where there were roads. But large numbers of labourers had to be called upon to supply the soldiers and to haul the heavy guns over those parts of the route where roads did not exist, particularly in the mountains close to the French fortress.⁹ A few statistics indicate the scale of the human effort needed to achieve victory. It is estimated that just building and maintaining the roads and supply routes alone involved about 20,000 civilian workers (*dân công*), most of the work being carried out by hand.¹⁰ The Việt Minh army used between 1,300 and 1,700 tons of ammunition, and had needed another 6,500 tons of other supplies.¹¹ All of this, materiel, food and other equipment, had been transported over the worst parts of the supply route by *dân công*, some of whom were volunteers while others had been conscripted. The people who worked as *dân công* had to work under the threat of French bombs and napalm, often transporting material at night over difficult mountain tracks, by hand, shoulders and bicycle, aided only by the few trucks available.¹² It is estimated that 20,991 bicycles and 11,000 small boats were used to supply the Việt Minh army;¹³ and a massive 261,451 men and women *dân công* and 500 pack horses took part.¹⁴

Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett gave an eye-witness account of these activities on the human scale in the supply areas. Writing from Việt Minh headquarters (which he reports as being in Hùng Sơn village, Thái Nguyên province, near Tân Trào) he describes the way in which the fighters at Điện Biên Phủ were supplied:

⁹ See Fredrik Logevall. *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam*. New York: Random House, 2012, pp. 414-417.

¹⁰ See John Prados. "Assessing Dien Bien Phu", Chapter 11, in *The First Vietnam War: Colonial Conflict and Cold War Crisis*, pp. 215-239, edited by Mark Atwood Lawrence and Fredrik Logevall. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007, p. 219 and Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place*, pp. 482, 484, 487. For estimates of the numbers of *dân công* involved in building and maintaining supply routes see Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place*, p. 128.

¹¹ Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place*, pp. 127-128.

¹² *ibid.*, pp. 131-134.

¹³ Christopher E. Goscha. "'Hell in a Very Small Place' Cold War and Decolonisation in the Assault on the Vietnamese Body at Dien Bien Phu", *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2010): 201-223, p. 206. This publication also gives a good account of the human cost on the Vietnamese side of the Điện Biên Phủ battle.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 217-218.

Had the French been able to see what went on at night along the roads and trails leading to that decisive battleground, their shock at the firepower hurled against them would have been less. The countryside which seemed so quiet and passive from the air in daytime boiled with activity at night.¹⁵

He continues reporting on the way in which the people involved used “every imaginable form of transport” to carry the considerable quantity of weapons and supplies to the army.

The Điện Biên Phủ battle, the preparations for which were witnessed by Wilfred Burchett, was an important stage in the Việt Minh struggle against the French. Looking back at the antecedents of that final battle, Christopher Goscha points out that 1950 was the watershed year in tactics used by the Việt Minh in fighting the French.¹⁶ If before this year the war consisted of low-intensity guerrilla skirmishes, from 1950 on the Việt Minh leaders deliberately chose to move to a conventional warfare, to engage the French directly and face to face in what was known as the “general counter offensive” or *tổng phản công*. But “[t]his meant achieving a divisional army, run by a modern general staff, and supported by sophisticated intelligence, communications, medical, and transport services”.¹⁷ The French were very well armed: they possessed a navy, air force and mechanised transport and, as Goscha quotes Trường Chinh in 1950, the then Secretary General of the Vietnamese Communist Party, “we have none of those things”.¹⁸

Goscha discusses this asymmetry in conflicts between liberation forces and the industrialised Western colonial powers which forces the leaders of decolonisation movements to rely upon the “surrounding geography, resources and people”. He argues that the Việt Minh was forced to collapse the distinction between civilians and combatants, leading to a situation of what he terms “total war”¹⁹ where a great proportion of the population is involved directly in warfare, if not as participants, then as victims. He points out that, by 1950, the Việt Minh leadership had realised that the home-grown

¹⁵ See Wilfred Burchett (Edited by George Burchett and Nick Shimmin). *Memoirs of a Rebel Journalist: The Autobiography of Wilfred Burchett*. Sydney: University of NSW Press, 2006, p. 428.

¹⁶ Christopher Goscha. “A ‘Total War’ of Decolonization? Social Mobilization and State-Building in Communist Vietnam (1949-54)”, *War & Society*, vol. 31, no. 2 (August, 2012): 136-162.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 138.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁹ Some may disagree with this term, but it is the phrase used by Goscha and others.

propaganda (*tuyên truyền*) that had been used in the 1940s was not going to be enough for wide-scale mobilisation and that other techniques which had proven successful in China and the Soviet Union would have to be imported. “These techniques included: emulation campaigns, rectification campaigns, cult of personality rituals, new hero veneration, and of course land reform”.²⁰ From 1950 onwards, the Việt Minh could also rely upon Chinese Government help, a Chinese Military Advisory Group for Vietnam being formally established in July 1950 (led by General Wei Guoqing) followed by Chinese military aid, together with some Chinese techniques of mobilising rural populations.²¹

The focus of this thesis is on an earlier stage in the opposition and resistance to French rule than Christopher Goscha discusses, that is from the 1930s to about 1950. I argue that there had been a long trajectory towards the Việt Minh victory at Điện Biên Phủ and that awakening and mobilising the Vietnamese peasantry played a critical role. In this thesis I examine the mobilisation and activism ground-work which was laid prior to embarking upon the Việt Minh offensives in the years following 1950.

Over the years I have collected many posters, prints and booklets of material used by the Việt Minh as motivational aids to encourage and recruit supporters. Most of these were lost but some have survived through repeated warfare and migration over the last 50 years. These invaluable materials tell many stories that would otherwise be unknown or forgotten. They also give a unique angle for us to study the thinking of the leaders and the operations of the Việt Minh cadres. The material which I have studied arises from both the period before the Resistance Against French Colonialism (*Kháng chiến Chống Thực dân Pháp*), which was formally declared by Hồ Chí Minh in 1946,²² and the first part of the Resistance, up to about 1950. Materials intended for mobilisation of the population were produced in many parts of Vietnam but, so far, very few posters and prints have been found from regions other than the northern mountainous region of

²⁰ Goscha, *A ‘Total War’ of Decolonization?*, p. 146.

²¹ Logevall, *Embers of War*, pp. 234-235.

²² Hồ Chí Minh. “Lời kêu gọi toàn quốc kháng chiến”, in *Toàn Tập*, Vol. 4 (2-9-1945 to 12-1947) of 10, pp. 202-205. Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Sự Thật for Viện Mác - Lê-nin, 1984. The resistance against French forces returning to Vietnam after the Second World War had, in fact, been in operation, particularly in the south, well before this appeal from Hồ Chí Minh.

Vietnam known as the *Việt bắc*. The materials which have survived, and the *Việt bắc* area where they were used, will be the focus of this thesis.

Tuyên truyền Defined

The techniques to mobilise large numbers of people used by the Việt Minh in the build-up to, and during the early part of, the Resistance were much more akin to persuasion than to the more coercive methods, such as compulsory military service, which were needed later and are discussed by Goscha.²³ Right from the start of the Việt Minh organised opposition to colonialism, the importance of propaganda, or *tuyên truyền*, was recognised. Hồ Chí Minh, in his December 1944 instructions for setting up the first units which were to become the Vietnam People's Army, wrote, as his first point:

The name of the *Armed Propaganda Brigade for the Liberation of Viet Nam* shows that greater importance is attached to its political than to its military action. It is a propaganda unit [*đội tuyên truyền*].²⁴

The name also indicates that these units, besides having the function of propaganda and information, were armed.

The Vietnamese word *tuyên truyền* is of central importance to the concepts covered in this thesis. Most of the material examined here was produced by, or on behalf of, boards or committees with “*tuyên truyền*” in their title and the same word also occurs on the masthead of the newspapers and on the booklets that are studied here. Because of its importance in the source material the word needs some explanation. It is usually translated into English as “propaganda” but the English word has other connotations which do not occur in the concept of *tuyên truyền*, particularly as used in the period and

²³ Goscha, *A 'Total War' of Decolonization?*.

²⁴ Hồ Chí Minh (December 1944). “Instructions for the Setting Up of the Armed Propaganda Brigade for the Liberation of Viet Nam”, translated by the publisher, in *Hồ Chí Minh: Selected Writings (1920-1969)*, pp. 47-48. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1973, p. 47. See also Ban Nghiên cứu Lịch sử Quân Đội, ed. *Lịch sử Quân Đội Nhân dân Việt Nam*, 3rd edition, Vol. 1 of 2. Hanoi: NXB Quân Đội Nhân dân, 1977, p. 114.

places studied here.²⁵ Hence, the word “*tuyên truyền*” is, in general, favoured in use over the English “propaganda” throughout this thesis.

A contemporary Vietnamese dictionary defines *tuyên truyền* as follows:

tuyên truyền đg. Giải thích rộng rãi để thuyết phục mọi người tán thành, ủng hộ, làm theo.²⁶

propaganda v. To explain broadly and clearly so that everyone can approve, contribute, follow an example.

There is nothing negative about the word in this definition but, on the other hand, a contemporary Vietnamese-English dictionary has the following definition:

tuyên truyền propaganda, propagation; ... ; [example] *dân chúng muốn chính phủ thông tin chứ không phải tuyên truyền* the people want information from the government not propaganda.²⁷

(the example given is the last of five). The head entry gives no indication of a “positive” or “negative” aspect to the word but the example quoted clearly distinguishes between “information” (*thông tin*) and “propaganda” (*tuyên truyền*) and it is likely that, since 1945-1946, the word has begun to acquire more of a negative feeling as familiarity with the English language grows in Vietnam. Many libraries in Vietnam still have a room called *Phòng Tuyên truyền Thông tin* or “Propaganda and Information Room”, housing IT equipment and information (often about the city or province).²⁸ The word *tuyên truyền* has no obvious negative attributes in that context. The English-language word “propaganda” similarly had no negative connotations when it was first used as the name of a committee of Roman Catholic cardinals responsible for foreign missions.²⁹

²⁵ There are many publications around the concepts of “propaganda” and “marketing” in English, but they are not relevant here. See, for example:

Edward L. Bernays. *Propaganda*. (Originally published: New York: H. Liveright, 1928). Brooklyn, NY: Ig Publishing, 2005.

Robert Jackall, ed. *Propaganda*. New York: New York University Press, 1995.

Robert B. Cialdini. *Influence: Science and Practice*, 5th edition. Boston, New York, San Francisco: Pearson Education, 2009.

²⁶ Hoàng Phê (Head of Editorial Board). *Từ điển tiếng Việt*, 7th edition. Hà Nội - Đà Nẵng: NXB Đà Nẵng Trung tâm từ điển học for Viện ngôn ngữ học, 2002, p. 1068.

²⁷ Bùi Phụng. *Từ điển Việt-Anh: Vietnamese English Dictionary*. Hanoi: NXB Thế Giới, 2000, p. 2129.

²⁸ Personal observations over many years, lately in 2008, in both Huế and Hanoi.

²⁹ See Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, eds. *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th edition. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 1150. The committee (formally a “congregation”) was founded in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV – see the entry in the Oxford English Dictionary at <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/152605?result=1&rskey=1c6Ifv&>

The compound word *tuyên truyền* is made up of two parts, both derived from Chinese characters. They are defined in a Sino-Việt dictionary as follows:

TUYÊN 1. *Bày tỏ*. 2. *Trịnh trọng đọc to, nói to*.³⁰

TUYÊN 1. express, give voice to. 2. Solemnly read aloud, speak aloud.

TRUYỀN đg. 1. *Đưa từ chỗ này sang chỗ khác*. Truyền tin. // *tuyên truyền, tương truyền*. 2. *Trao lại cho người sau....*.³¹

TRUYỀN v. 1. Carry from one place to another. Communicate news. // propagandise, it is said in legend. 2. Hand over to the next person....

(it is the first meaning of *truyền* which is used in the compound).³² Thus the underlying meaning of *tuyên truyền* seems to lack any negative component but, instead, involves the transmission of important information and it is this meaning which is behind the use of the word in the materials studied in this thesis and is behind the word as used in Vietnam until very recently. The *tuyên truyền* of the Việt Minh, particularly in the period under study here, was not the underhand manipulation of the masses by an elite, which the English-language “propaganda” often implies.

Mao Zedong once described the Long March of his Communist Party Army as a “seeding machine”.³³ By that he meant that everywhere the marchers went, through eleven provinces, they spread ideas that were to sprout and come to fruition later. The people who met and helped the remnants of the Army who had escaped from Jiangxi saw a possibility of escaping from their poverty and the oppression that they suffered.³⁴ In the same way, the Việt Minh, at least in the early stages, saw their *tuyên truyền* as seeding ideas in the minds of the people who saw and heard it. There was fertile soil in much of Vietnam, and particularly in the northern mountainous region, the *Việt bắc*, for the idea of an independent Vietnam, beholden to no foreign power, and able to hold its own

³⁰ Phan Văn Các. *Từ Điển Từ Hán Việt*. Hồ Chí Minh City: NXB Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh, 2001, p. 444.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 436.

³² See also Greg Lockhart. *Nation in Arms*, p. 93, where he gives the meaning of *truyền* as “to hand down” ... a tradition or inheritance”.

³³ Mao Zedong (1935). “On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism (December 27, 1935)”, in *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings 1912-1949*, Vol. V: “Toward the Second United Front, January 1935 - July 1937”, pp. 86-102, edited by Stuart R. Schram and Nancy J. Hodes. Armonk, London: M.E. Sharpe, 1999, p. 92.

³⁴ Further comments on the relevance of the Chinese experience to the Vietnamese situation are made in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

among other nations. The *tuyên truyền* of the Việt Minh sowed the idea of something beyond the village, which had been the limit of vision for many of the people who saw and heard it. Some of the *tuyên truyền* studied in this thesis may look, at first glance, to be primitive, and even childish. But it was in tune with the Vietnamese society of the time and place where it was distributed, it was work to which people responded, often wholeheartedly. Much of it was the work of artists and writers from the urban areas who responded to Việt Minh calls to join with “the masses” and to lend their skills to the cause of independence.³⁵

In this thesis I study the trajectory of *tuyên truyền* and reveal how it took time for the Vietnamese revolutionaries (*người cách mạng*, as Hồ Chí Minh called them) to come to the realisation as to what techniques were needed to engage the largely illiterate peasant target population of the *Việt bắc*. It took time to develop the realisation that slogans and text messages alone did not resonate with them, to realise the need to tap into the folk culture, the heroes, the poetry, the songs, the rhyme and rhythm that drives a rural population that is not familiar with literacy and to connect with peasant aspirations about land and opportunity. It needed a deep understanding of village culture, of the rhythms of peasant life and a respect for the understanding and intelligence of the people in the rural *Việt bắc* to be able to craft *tuyên truyền* that was honest and useful information for them, to be able to connect them with the national story, in an international context.

The new propaganda moved away from the view of the French colonisers as the only actors who had agency, and from whom shorter working hours, reasonable pay for reasonable work, even a sense of nation and worth, had to be requested as if by mendicants. Even though much of the *tuyên truyền* was circulated in areas where many of the people identified themselves as belonging to ethnic groups such as the *Nùng*, the new *tuyên truyền* portrayed “the Vietnamese people” as an entity. This was a new entity, beyond the village and beyond the ethnic group. The *tuyên truyền* in its initial stages introduced its audience to ideas of nationhood by showing how other nations existed and

³⁵ Chapter 5 of this thesis discusses this matter further.

were actors on the world stage, it showed how a new nation of Vietnam could take its place among them.

Later chapters of this thesis show how some of Hồ Chí Minh's concepts concerning mobilisation were realised in the *tuyên truyền* which was produced by him, or under his supervision. However, the path of mobilising people through *tuyên truyền* was not always straightforward and Hồ Chí Minh's ideals were not always in the ascendant. Bùi Tín, who served with the Việt Minh forces but later left Vietnam for France and the United States, writes:

It could be said that the spread of Maoism after 1951 began to stultify our consciences and caused lasting harm right up until now [1995]. We forgot our basic national values and lost our sense of pride and self-confidence. We put an end to the exciting and innocent period of respect uniting those who joined the Resistance. Instead we imposed a yoke on the special nature of our peasantry. Repression was mistaken for enlightenment and Progress.³⁶

Benoît Tréglodé also notes Hồ Chí Minh's unease at the change in direction engendered by the arrival of Chinese advisors in the early 1950s and how he “feared a Chinese takeover of the ideological terrain at the time [1951]”.³⁷

Scholarship on the role of *Tuyên truyền*

Most western scholarly works dealing with Vietnam's search for independence mention the role of *tuyên truyền* as used by the Việt Minh, albeit sometimes only in passing. The best account, to date, of the role of *tuyên truyền* in the period before the Resistance proper began is that of Greg Lockhart in his description of the development of the Armed Propaganda brigades (later to form the People's Army of Vietnam) in the *Việt bắc* from the early 1940s.³⁸ He highlights the central role played by Hồ Chí Minh in using his ability to build strong social networks based on commonly-held beliefs and ideals, networks that were able to bring people in the *Việt bắc* to follow the Việt Minh.³⁹

³⁶ Bui Tin. *Following Ho Chi Minh: Memoirs of a North Vietnamese Colonel*, translated by Judy Stowe and Do Van. Bathurst, NSW: Crawford House Publishing, 1995, p. 24.

³⁷ Benoît de Tréglodé. *Heroes and Revolution in Vietnam*, translated by Claire Duiker. Singapore: NUS Press in association with IRASEC, 2012, p. 57.

³⁸ Greg Lockhart, *Nation in Arms*, pp. 92-103.

³⁹ See especially *ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

This theme is one of those that is investigated and developed further in this thesis, particularly in Chapters 3 and 4.

David Marr's story of the eventful year 1945 in Vietnam also touches on the lead-up to that year and on Communist Party and Việt Minh activities among the people of the *Việt bắc*.⁴⁰ He describes the flowering of Vietnamese literary activity in the 1941-1944 period⁴¹ and the fundamental changes wrought by the return of Hồ Chí Minh to Vietnam in 1941.⁴² His account describes Việt Minh activity in the *Việt bắc* and Hồ Chí Minh's involvement in teaching, drawing and writing activities, the training of cadres, and particularly the development of networks among the minority ethnic groups in the *Việt bắc*.⁴³ He also describes Japanese and French attempts to engage Vietnamese youth and to develop patriotic fervour, on the French side, for France and French colonialism.⁴⁴ He mentions Japanese attempts to encourage "Asia for the Asiatics" and the use of Japanese film showings in the rural areas which also "portrayed victories over the white man".⁴⁵

William Duiker discusses Hồ Chí Minh's activities upon his return to Vietnam in January 1941.⁴⁶ He points out how, at Pác Bó, where Hồ Chí Minh and his comrades based themselves, they wore clothing appropriate to the Nùng people, among whom they were living, and Việt Minh and Communist Party cadres were encouraged to learn local languages.

Pierre Brocheux highlights the role of *tuyên truyền* in Việt Minh activities, singling out Hồ Chí Minh's production of skilful *tuyên truyền*, such as his *Lịch sử Nước Ta* (analysed in Chapter 4 of this thesis) and the newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* (studied in Chapter 3 of this thesis).⁴⁷ He also mentions the way in which "tracts were being distributed by the Viet Minh armed propaganda wing", but gives no details of the contents of the tracts.

⁴⁰ David G. Marr. *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, pp. 92-95.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 164.

⁴³ *ibid.*, pp. 172-184.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 75-78.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 81,91.

⁴⁶ William J. Duiker. *Ho Chi Minh*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2000, pp. 248-251.

⁴⁷ Pierre Brocheux. *Ho Chi Minh: A Biography*, translated by Claire Duiker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 74-75.

However, the comment from the French Résident of Thái Nguyên province that “...the average Annamite in the street will [now] answer back more frankly and show less complacency than in the past”⁴⁸ seems to indicate that the *tuyên truyền* was quite effective.

Alexander Woodside agrees on the importance of Hồ Chí Minh’s *Lịch sử Nước Ta* but highlights the importance of three other of Hồ Chí Minh’s small publications – all written in poetic form – in the Cao Bằng area.⁴⁹ They are “The Geography of Cao Bang”, “The Geography of Our Country” and the “Five Character Classic”. The last of these, with the Vietnamese title *Việt Minh Ngũ tự Kinh*,⁵⁰ is discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis, and a translation appears as Appendix E. Woodside points out that the purpose of providing a geography of the Cao Bằng area was “to give local guerrillas a sense of their own province – as opposed to just their villages – and to heighten their local self-respect”.⁵¹ He points out that, whereas Hồ Chí Minh’s “History” was to engender loyalty to a cultural Vietnamese nation, the “Geography” was to promote loyalty to a nation-state as a topographic unit. The “Five-character classic” was to be used as a reading text which, incidentally, was an “instrument of indoctrination” and “expounded such things as the communist organization ethic” in much the same way that the Confucian “Three-character classic” was to be used.⁵² Chapter 4 of this thesis uses my translation of the “Five-character classic” in discussion and points out that the values lauded are those of “the revolutionary man”, rather than explicitly communist values.

Stein Tønnesson highlights the foundation work of Hồ Chí Minh during the 1940s, and stresses the importance of the role of *tuyên truyền* in uniting and mobilising communities. He analyses the way in which Hồ Chí Minh’s small newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* was designed to appeal to the people in the Cao Bằng area and to make the readers (or listeners in the case of the illiterates) feel that they were part of a much larger – even

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 85.

⁴⁹ Alexander B. Woodside. *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976, pp. 220-221.

⁵⁰ I translate this title as “The Việt Minh book of pentameters”.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 220.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 221.

international – movement.⁵³ Tønnesson also mentions the role of Việt Minh *tuyên truyền* among Vietnamese prisoners of the French, particularly in the south and centre of the country.⁵⁴ He points out that the Việt Minh held out a long-range vision of where a people's revolution might lead and that patience was required: "A revolutionary movement will always attract a number of individuals who are mainly interested in the excitement of the revolution as such, and who only reluctantly accept the necessity of a long period of preparatory work. Again and again *Doc Lap* had to remind them of the need to organize, sacrifice and prepare".⁵⁵ Việt Minh *tuyên truyền* of the pre-resistance period was, of necessity, far-sighted, with an eye firmly on the eventual prize, Vietnamese independence.

Fredrik Logevall has provided an excellent account of the general course of the Resistance Against French Colonialism, not neglecting the importance of "the battle for the support of the local population".⁵⁶ His account provides an excellent background to the political and military environment in which the Resistance took place, continuing the story right up to the temporary partition of Vietnam in 1954 and placing the role of the United States of America in context.

All of the scholars mentioned above point out the importance of *tuyên truyền* to the work of the Việt Minh, and agree that a principal role of *tuyên truyền* was to build a sense of social solidarity among certain groups and to widen horizons.

At various times novels, short stories and poetry were important vehicles for rousing awareness and hence they are also relevant for this thesis. Neil Jamieson's perceptive work on Vietnamese literature, particularly of the 1930s,⁵⁷ for example, provides some excellent insights into changing attitudes in the cities during the period he studies. Kim Ninh also examines the role of literature as *tuyên truyền* and the involvement of artists

⁵³ Stein Tønnesson. *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945: Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh and de Gaulle in a World at War*. London, Newbury Park, New Delhi: SAGE Publications (for PRIO International Peace Research Institute Oslo), 1991, pp. 125-132.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 139-143.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 146.

⁵⁶ See Logevall, *Embers of War*, pp. 192-193.

⁵⁷ Neil L. Jamieson. *Understanding Vietnam*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

and writers in producing some mobilisation material.⁵⁸ Her work is particularly relevant for the period after 1945 and is discussed in more depth in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

In an insightful account, Benoît Tréglodé discusses the importance of the hero in Vietnamese culture and describes how “Vietnamese leaders had relied upon this principle [the heroic, mythic and historic ancestor] for centuries to produce a official historiography celebrating a lineage rich with heroic figures”⁵⁹ and points out that the Communist Party (acting through the Việt Minh) was true to this tradition.⁶⁰ In particular, after 1952, a new type of hero, probably unique to Vietnam, was idealised:

Unlike their counterparts in China, North Vietnamese leaders saw the new hero as much more than an infinite biographical source. On the contrary, he needed an air of normalcy in order to be easily understood by the average peasant, who was often far removed from the contingencies and abstractions of political discourse.⁶¹

The “new hero” continued the appeal to the quotidian founded in the *tuyên truyền* first developed by Hồ Chí Minh and some examples can be seen in Chapter 6.

There is little in the literature that constitutes a direct analysis of the primary source material used in this thesis, hence the need for developing that analysis here.

Vietnamese literature forms the basis for discussion in a number of the chapters of this thesis, in particular Chapter 5, and useful background on Vietnamese literature can be found in Nguyễn Khắc Viện and Hữu Ngọc’s early work translated from the original French.⁶² This publication is quite strong on literature of the period studied here, that is from 1930 up to 1950, particularly from a Vietnamese perspective. It can be considered to be a “view from the north” in that it has something of a bias in its selections of literature, particularly towards the experiences and views of those who were sympathetic to, if not actual fervent supporters of, the Việt Minh in the Resistance War. As such it is

⁵⁸ Kim N. B. Ninh. *A World Transformed: The Politics of Culture in Revolutionary Vietnam, 1945-1965*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.

⁵⁹ Tréglodé, *Heroes and Revolution in Vietnam*, p. 15.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 26.

⁶² Nguyễn Khắc Viện and Hữu Ngọc. *Vietnamese Literature: Historical Background and Texts*, translated by Mary Cowen, Carolyn Swetland, Đặng Thế Bình, Paddy Farrington, Elizabeth Hodgkin and Hữu Ngọc. Hanoi: Red River Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1976.

a useful resource for investigating the thinking of artists and writers during that period, however the original Vietnamese is not published in this volume. Huỳnh Sanh Thông has published two wide-ranging anthologies of Vietnamese poetry but there is little material from the period of the Resistance War.⁶³ Thông has also published two good analyses of the form and style of Vietnamese poetry in the introductory chapters of his two anthologies of 1979 and the updated one of 1996.⁶⁴ There are occasional articles in the Vietnamese scholarly press which study some of the materials addressed here, for example the two publications studied in Chapter 4, *Lịch sử Nước Ta* and *Ngũ tự Kinh*, are mentioned in an article reviewing Hồ Chí Minh's educational and mobilisation work when he first returned to Vietnam in 1941.⁶⁵

Source Materials

Some of the primary source material which I have collected has recently been made available in modern-day Vietnam in the form of reprints from the archival records.

Apart from this thesis, commentary on this source material is scant.

Primary Materials

Of the materials used to mobilise and motivate the people of the northern part of Vietnam, there were newspapers, particularly *Việt Nam Độc Lập* (discussed extensively in Chapter 3), booklets (two of which are discussed in Chapter 4) and posters (which are examined in Chapter 6). To me, the medium used in some of these materials must be seen as part of the message that is being conveyed. That is, the type of home-made paper (necessitated by the cost of importing higher-quality paper), the seemingly simple cartoon style drawings and the simple language are all part of the media that are at home in the

⁶³ Huỳnh Sanh Thông, ed. *An Anthology of Vietnamese Poems: From the Eleventh through the Twentieth Centuries*, translated by Huỳnh Sanh Thông. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996.
Huỳnh Sanh Thông, ed. *The Heritage of Vietnamese Poetry*, translated by Huỳnh Sanh Thông. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979.

⁶⁴ Huỳnh Sanh Thông, "Introduction", in *The Heritage of Vietnamese Poetry*, pp. xxv-xlv, edited by Huỳnh Sanh Thông. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979.
Huỳnh Sanh Thông, "Introduction", in *An Anthology of Vietnamese Poems: From the Eleventh through the Twentieth Centuries*, pp. 1-25, edited by Huỳnh Sanh Thông. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996.

⁶⁵ Phan Ngọc Liên. "Tìm Hiểu về Công tác Vận động, Giáo dục Quần chúng của Hồ Chủ Tịch trong Thời gian Người ở Pắc-bó", *Nghiên cứu Lịch sử*, no. 149 (March-April, 1973): 13-21,30.

Vietnamese rural areas, these are all things that would be familiar to the peasantry and serve to send the message that this material is from people that they know and for the people to whom it is directed. But beyond this, much of the material makes particular use of folk forms, for example, verse which is familiar to and used by the people of the *Việt bắc*. The use of these kinds of forms, with their rhyme and rhythm, is a feature common in communities where much of the population is illiterate as it aids in memory and is used for the transmission of important cultural information.⁶⁶ The appearance of this particular form is demonstrated throughout much of the mobilisation materials and is discussed in later chapters.

The primary materials needed for this study are those of mobilisation, that is, materials that have motivated people, changed their world-view and caused them to change their minds – to *giác ngộ cách mạng* “to come to revolutionary consciousness”. A search for source materials shows that libraries, museums and archives in Vietnam seem to have the best collections, and this is where most of my material has been gained. There is not a lot available and museum staff in Vietnam have expressed the opinion to me that “it is a miracle that anything has survived”,⁶⁷ given the two very severe wars (the Resistance against French Colonialism (1946-1954) and the War Against the American Imperialists (1963-1975)). And there was yet another disastrous element which could have destroyed these valuable materials, the Chinese invasion of the northern part of Vietnam in 1979, but again some survived. Because of the origin of these primary source materials, and because the *Việt bắc* played a crucial role in the 1940s and early 1950s, it will be the focus of this thesis. Wherever possible I will try to utilise other references in other parts of the country in order to bring out the larger context and make comparisons.

For the purposes of studying mobilisation techniques using primary materials, it is convenient to divide the period up to the end of French colonisation into four:

⁶⁶ Further discussion on this matter can be found in Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. London and New York: Methuen, 1982 and Rob Hurle, “Shannon Ahmad's Writing: Echoes of an Oral Tradition”. BA(Hons) thesis, Faculty of Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1989.

⁶⁷ This was a comment made to me by staff at the Museum of the Revolution in Hanoi.

- The period before the Second World War;
- The Second World War, when both Japan and France had forces in Vietnam and the Việt Minh were building up support in the northern part of Vietnam under the leadership of Hồ Chí Minh, culminating in the declaration of independence on 2 September 1945;
- The initial part of the Resistance Against French Colonialism, which can be said to have begun in the South with French soldiers being released and rearmed by the British on 22 September 1945⁶⁸ and to have progressed into full-scale resistance with Hồ Chí Minh's call for nation-wide resistance on 20 December 1946.⁶⁹ The initial phase of the Resistance moved to a new phase in 1950 with the creation of the Chinese Military Advisory Group in Beijing and the arrival of Chinese advisors after the victory of the Chinese Communist Party over the nationalist forces of Chiang-Kai-Shek;⁷⁰
- The period from about 1950 up to the Vietnamese victory at Điện Biên Phủ in May 1954.

Most of the available primary materials for the period before the Second World War comprises newspapers, some of which are still available in archives and reprints, and in posters, which are also available in museums, archives and in some reprints which may be generally available.⁷¹ Both the Museum of the Revolution in Hanoi and the Vietnamese National Archives have produced recent publications of posters and leaflets used prior to the Second World War.⁷² These publications contain transcriptions of the material held in those places and they also include a few facsimiles – although these are somewhat

⁶⁸ See Logevall, *Embers of War*, pp. 113-115.

⁶⁹ See Hồ Chí Minh, *Lời kêu gọi toàn quốc kháng chiến*.

⁷⁰ Logevall, *Embers of War*, pp. 234-235.

⁷¹ “Generally available” here means generally available at various times in Vietnamese bookshops. For much of the material I have studied, the print runs are typically quite small (a few hundreds, maybe a thousand) and some books are produced “for distribution only” and are not for general sale. Libraries which collect Vietnamese works will usually have these available.

⁷² Phạm Mai Hùng, Triệu Hiến, Trần Hải Nhị, Nguyễn Thị Sáu, Nguyễn Trọng Hậu and Ngô Thị Ba (Compilers). *Truyền Đơn Cách Mạng Trước Tháng 9 Năm 1945* [Revolutionary Leaflets prior to September 1945]. Hà Nội: NXB Chính Trị Quốc Gia for the Bảo Tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2004. Dương Văn Khảm, Ngô Thiếu Hiệu, Đào Thị Diễm, Vũ Văn Thuyền and Lê Huy Tuấn (Editorial Board). *Tuyên truyền cách mạng trước năm 1945, sưu tập tài liệu lưu trữ*. Hanoi: NXB Lao Động for Cục Lưu Trữ Nhà Nước Trung Tâm Lưu Trữ Quốc Gia I, 2001.

variable in quality, many being quite poor – and they also sometimes contain a few (often cursory) comments on the material. Some examples have been reproduced and are discussed in Chapter 2. The newspapers *Giải Phóng* (“Liberation”) and *Dân chúng* (“The Masses”) from the same period have also been transcribed, reprinted and published by the Museum of the Revolution but unfortunately include only a few facsimiles.⁷³

For the period that includes the Second World War, the important mobilisation material that was used is summarised in an internal Việt Minh document reviewing experiences within the organisation in the *Việt bắc* up to 1945.⁷⁴ It comments on the type of materials as follows:

Về mặt tuyên truyền, ở Việt-Bắc có báo Việt-Nam Độc Lập, sách, ca hát, triển lãm, đội tuyên truyền Hồng-Phong.

About the propaganda front in the *Việt bắc*, there was the newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* (“Independent Vietnam”), books, songs, and the propaganda unit *Hồng Phong* (“Red Wind”).⁷⁵

The newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* was thus considered to be an important element for mobilisation and has recently been transcribed and reprinted, with a few facsimile pages.⁷⁶ It and its influence are discussed extensively in Chapter 3. Some of the books (they are more accurately described as booklets) mentioned in the Việt Minh document are available in their original form for viewing at museums, primarily at the Museum of the Revolution in Hanoi. One such booklet (*Lịch sử Nước Ta* or “History of Our Land”, by Nguyễn Ái Quốc (Hồ Chí Minh)) is discussed later in this thesis and a facsimile, with

⁷³ Phạm Mai Hùng (Head of Compilation Board). *Giải phóng 1934-1935-1936*. (Originally published: as Newspaper series). Hanoi: NXB Lao Động for Bảo tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 1998.

Phạm Mai Hùng (Head of Compilation Board). *Báo Dân chúng (1938-1939)*, Vol. 2 of 3. (Originally published: as Newspaper Series). Hanoi: NXB Lao Động for Bảo tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2000.

Phạm Mai Hùng (Head of Compilation Board). *Báo Dân chúng (1938-1939)*, Vol. 1 of 3. (Originally published: as Newspaper Series). Hanoi: NXB Lao Động for Bảo tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2000.

Phạm Mai Hùng (Head of Compilation Board). *Báo Dân chúng (1938-1939)*, Vol. 3 of 3. (Originally published: as Newspaper Series). Hanoi: NXB Lao Động for Bảo tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2000.

⁷⁴ *Kinh nghiệm Việt-minh ở Việt-bắc* (Originally published: 1945). Hà Nội: Tổng Bộ Việt Minh, 1946, p. 14. This publication is available in the People’s Army Library in Hanoi, but also reprinted in some collections of Communist Party documents. See Appendix H for a translation of Section IV of the document.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p. 14.

⁷⁶ Phạm Mai Hùng (Head of Compilation Board). *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)* [The Newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* (1941-1945)]. (Originally published: as Newspaper series). Hanoi: NXB Lao Động for Bảo tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2000.

translation, is shown in Appendix B. *Lịch sử Nước Ta* has been extensively republished, with modifications, and copies are available in modern-day Vietnam, some aspects of which are discussed in Chapter 4. Another one of the booklets, previously mentioned, (*Việt Minh Ngũ tự kinh* or “Việt Minh Book of Pentameters”) is also discussed in Chapter 4 and a translation appears in Appendix E. It has not, to my knowledge, been republished. Not mentioned in the review document is the newspaper *Cứu Quốc* (“National Salvation”), which was first published in the countryside and moved to Hanoi in 1945, but it does not appear to have been transcribed and republished – copies are available in some institutions in Vietnam.⁷⁷

Songs are recognised as being of great importance and are specifically mentioned in the Việt Minh review:

Ngoài báo Việt-Nam Độc-Lập và các sách, ảnh hưởng của ca hát cũng đáng đặc biệt chú ý, không có gì chóng phổ biến trong quần chúng và kích thích quần chúng bằng ca hát. Hễ có một bài ca mới xuất hiện là ai nấy đều thuộc. Thanh niên biết chữ là chẳng có mấy ai không có quyển sách tay chép các bài ca. Các bạn ca hát địa phương mọc như nấm. Không có cuộc hội nghị nào, không có cuộc mít-tinh nào mà không kết thúc bởi những bài ca hùng [hùng] hồn bi thảm.

Apart from the newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* and the books, the influence of songs is also worth special attention. Nothing is more quickly popular with the masses, nor excites them more than singing. If a new song appears, then everyone learns it by heart, women, children, all learn it by heart. Very few young people who can read do not have copy-books of songs, and singing in local areas springs up like mushrooms. There are no conferences, no meetings, that close without eloquent and sad songs.⁷⁸

In spite of “singing springing up like mushrooms” and all those young people having copy-books of songs, only a small amount of this material remains and is available at the Museum of the Revolution and elsewhere. I have investigated some provincial libraries and museums in Vietnam, searching for musical material, but have not found any

⁷⁷ Copies have been seen at the *Viện Lịch Sử Việt Nam* in Hanoi, and copies are also available at the National Library.

⁷⁸ *Kinh nghiệm Việt-minh ở Việt-bắc*, p. 15, my translation.

surviving examples. Some songs turn up in reminiscences⁷⁹ and some have been republished in collections⁸⁰ but it is not usually possible to verify their provenance.

The “Red Wind” propaganda team was reported to be very popular, and to have produced a range of materials:

Đội tuyên truyền Hồng-Phong vừa tổ chức (6-1943) cũng đã nổi tiếng. Ấy là nhờ chương trình tuyên truyền khéo chọn, gồm những bài diễn-văn rõ ràng dễ hiểu về vấn-đề cần thiết như: vì sao phải đoàn kết, nhờ đâu c. m.⁸¹ sẽ thành công, bao giờ khởi nghĩa, làm thế nào chống khủng-bố, chuẩn bị vũ trang khởi nghĩa vườn không nhà trống...

The *Red Wind* propaganda team was only just organised in June 1943, and it has become famous. This is thanks to the skilful selection of propaganda programs, including speeches which are clear, intelligible, easy to understand about urgent matters, such as: why we must unite, asking where the revolution will be successful, when to rise up, how to oppose terror, preparation of armaments for the uprising, scorched earth,...⁸²

Unfortunately I have been unable to find any further reference to the famous *Red Wind* propaganda unit, although this extract gives an idea of the work that they did. There is no evidence available to show whether they put on performances (plays) or not, but it would not be surprising to find that this was one of their activities. The passage goes on to praise the songs that the team produced and possibly they are represented, but unattributed, in some of the musical material in the Museum.

For the period between the end of the Second World War in August 1945 and the outbreak of the Resistance Against the French in December 1946, newspapers were produced in both the north and the south, and some lively discussion about the place of culture in society appeared in the monthly Hanoi magazine *Tiên Phong*, which has been republished in facsimile form. This publication provides a wealth of material about the activity of writers and artists in a period of relative calm.⁸³ Chapter 5 of this thesis

⁷⁹ See, for example, Phạm Gia Huân and Trịnh Nam Hải, eds. *Đội Tuyên truyền Xung phong Việt Minh Trung Bộ 1945-1946*, 2nd printing. Huế: Bảo tàng Thừa Thiên Huế for Ban Liên lạc Đội TTXP Việt Minh Trung Bộ, 1995, p.18.

⁸⁰ For example, Yên Thảo and Lê Quốc Thắng, eds. *100 Ca khúc tiền chiến (tuyển tập)*. Ho Chi Minh City: NXB Trẻ, 2001.

⁸¹ c. m. is short for *cách mạng*, “revolution”.

⁸² *Kinh nghiệm Việt-minh ở Việt-bắc*, p. 15.

⁸³ Lại Nguyên Ân, Ngô Văn Phú and Nguyễn Kiên, eds. *Sưu tập trọn bộ Tiên Phong (1945-1946) (Tập một)*, Vol. 1 of 2. Hanoi: NXB Hội Nhà văn, 1996.

Lại Nguyên Ân, Ngô Văn Phú and Nguyễn Kiên, eds. *Sưu tập trọn bộ Tiên Phong* ...continued on page 20

examines the development of Vietnamese culture in the northern regions, the *Việt bắc*, as artists and writers fled there once fighting broke out in Hanoi, with reference to some of the ideas debated through the pages of *Tiên Phong*.

In late 1945 and 1946, once the Resistance War had started, the Việt Minh aimed to maintain the people's energy and enthusiasm that was demonstrated in the uprisings of August 1945 in the *Việt bắc*,⁸⁴ to join the fight for independence, a necessary step if the enterprise was to have any chance of success. Accordingly more mobilisation material of various kinds was produced from 1946 on, and Chapter 6 shows what resources were available for this task, and discusses that material as well as the source of the ideas and concepts employed. Conservation conditions within museums in Vietnam have varied over time and, in the past, they were not as suitable for conserving rather delicate paper materials as they are now. Thus, in spite of the best efforts of a dedicated staff, some of the material is not in the best condition. I have photographed about two thirds of the collection of posters in the Museum of the Revolution in Hanoi, the contents of which are analysed in Chapter 6 of this thesis. The Museum has recently produced an excellent compendium of the posters in the collection and it is on sale to the public.⁸⁵ Although this compendium contains no analysis of the posters there is an interesting article by the artist Trần Khánh Chương discussing the provenance of some of the posters. The article recounts the way in which artists moved to the *Việt bắc* after the Resistance War broke out at the end of 1946 and points out that many of the posters were produced by professional artists, using images and sometimes techniques borrowed from the people among whom they were living.⁸⁶ This article is one of the very few sources of the names of the artists involved in preparing the mobilisation material, very few of whom are

(1945-1946) (*Tập hai*), Vol. 2 of 2. Hanoi: NXB Hội Nhà văn, 1996.

⁸⁴ See Trần Hữu Đính and Lê Trung Dũng. *Cách mạng tháng tám 1945: Những sự kiện lịch sử*. Hanoi: NXB Khoa Học Xã Hội for Viện Sử Học Trung Tâm Khoa Học Xã Hội và Nhân Văn Quốc Gia, 2000.

⁸⁵ Triều Văn Hiền, Trần Hải Nhị, Lê Thị Thúy Hoàn and Ngô Thị Ba (Compilers). *9 Năm Kháng Chiến Qua Tranh Tuyên Truyền Cổ Động [9 years of resistance war through propaganda paintings and posters]*, translated by Lê Thị Thúy Hoàn. Hà Nội: SAVINA for Bảo Tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2007.

⁸⁶ Trần Khánh Chương. "Một bộ sưu tập quý", translated by Lê Thị Thúy Hoàn, in *9 Năm Kháng Chiến Qua Tranh Tuyên Truyền Cổ Động [9 years of resistance war through propaganda paintings and posters]*, pp. 7-10, edited by Triều Văn Hiền, Trần Hải Nhị, Lê Thị Thúy Hoàn and Ngô Thị Ba. Hà Nội: SAVINA for Bảo Tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2007.

acknowledged in their work. Some of the Museum's posters have also been reproduced in a book in "coffee-table" format from the Department of Culture and Information, the pictorial material being of somewhat inferior quality.⁸⁷ Where these posters, leaflets and booklets have been reproduced in this thesis I have chosen to reproduce them from my own collection and I have used my own photograph numbers as my catalogue reference, followed by the Museum's catalogue number, where this is available. So-called "propaganda posters" have become very popular lately, being reproduced in books from the West,⁸⁸ and there is even a shop in Hanoi selling full-scale reproductions, however most are from a later period and use different techniques of persuasion with different aims that are not relevant here.

A smaller number of the posters in my collection cover the period from about 1950 to the Vietnamese victory at Điện Biên Phủ. Over this period the methods of mobilisation gradually began to involve more coercion and the offer of incentives, such as moves to implement the long-promised land reform.⁸⁹

Over recent years, the *Nhà Xuất Bản Chính Trị Quốc Gia* (National Political Publishing House) has produced collections of Communist Party Documents and Works of Hồ Chí Minh. These collections should be approached circumspectly and should not be considered to be source materials for some of the reasons given in later chapters. In brief, documents that were once considered to be important can fall out of favour and be omitted from collections, as is the case for the Việt Minh document introduced on page 17, which appears in the collection of Party documents published in 1977,⁹⁰ but is omitted in the 2000 collection.⁹¹ In addition, some redaction occurs in the published collections. An example is discussed in Chapter 4, where Hồ Chí Minh's *Lịch sử Nước*

⁸⁷ Nguyễn Đạo Toàn, Lê Hữu Cảnh and Nguyễn Công Quang (Compilers). *60 Năm Tranh Cổ Động Việt Nam 1945-2005*, translated by staff from NXB Thế Giới. Hà Nội: Bộ Văn Hóa - Thông Tin, Cục Văn Hóa - Thông Tin, 2006.

⁸⁸ See, for example, David Heather and Sherry Buchanan. *Vietnam Posters: The David Heather Collection*. Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2009.

⁸⁹ See Goscha, *A 'Total War' of Decolonization?*, pp. 146-147.

⁹⁰ Đảng Cộng Sản Việt Nam Ương (Editorial Committee). *Văn Kiện Đảng 1945-1954 (Lưu Hành Nội Bộ) - Tập 1*, Vol. 1 of 3. Hanoi: Ban Nghiên Cứu Lịch sử Đảng Trung Ương Xuất Bản, 1978, pp.461-487.

⁹¹ See *Văn Kiện Đảng Toàn Tập*. Vol. 7 (1940-1945) of 54. Hà Nội: NXB Chính Trị Quốc Gia, 2000 and *Văn Kiện Đảng Toàn Tập*. Vol. 8 (1945-1947) of 54. Hà Nội: NXB Chính Trị Quốc Gia, 2000.

Ta is shown to have had two lines removed in the recently published versions when compared to the hand-written copies from 1942.

Memoirs and Reminiscences

Memoirs and reminiscences give different insights into cultural conditions and changes than to those which can be incorporated into traditional histories, but there are dangers in relying too heavily upon such material. It is often narrow in scope and may be written many years after the events described, with all of the associated colouring and loss of memory that that entails and such material must be approached circumspectly. Memoirs written from notes made at the time are possibly more reliable, and examples include the memoirs of Michel l'Herpinière, who was an entrepreneur and commercial agent working in Hanoi from 1936 to 1951, his memoirs largely being the work of his step-daughter, made from notes written at the time, supplemented by her interviews with him.⁹²

Another useful memoir is the story of the battle for Highway Number 4, which runs between Lạng Sơn and Cao Bằng, in 1950, the first big victory achieved by the Việt Minh. This particular memoir was written by the Việt Minh commanding officer at the time, Đặng Văn Việt, and was probably completed in the late 1980s – the date of writing is uncertain and it was possibly embellished over time. It was originally published by the Education Publishing House but was recently reprinted and published privately by the author (printing was done at the Army Printery).⁹³ An English-language version was produced by the Foreign Languages Publishing House in 1990 and, again, has been reprinted and published privately by the author.⁹⁴ It is, of course, a “winner’s story”.

There are a few French soldier memoirs, such as one by Guy de Chaumont Guitry, who was a French soldier who served in the colonial forces in Vietnam from early 1947, dying

⁹² Mandaley Perkins. *Hanoi, adieu. A bittersweet memoir of French Indochina*. Sydney: Fourth Estate, HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005.

⁹³ Đặng Văn Việt. *Đường Số 4 rực lửa*. (Originally published: Nhà Xuất Bản Giáo Dục (unknown date)). Hà Nội: Privately published, 2007.

⁹⁴ Đặng Văn Việt. *The Drama of the Colonial Highway N4 (1950): The first great victory of the Vietminh Army over the French Expeditionary Corps. (The border campaign 1950)*. (Originally published: Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1990). Hà Nội: Privately published, 2006.

at Vĩnh Long in the Mekong Delta at the end of 1948.⁹⁵ A recently published book reproduces many of the wonderful sketches made by Helmut Loof-Wissowa during his time as a member of the French Expeditionary Forces in Indochina from 1948 to 1954.⁹⁶ There is little amongst the soldier reminiscences that is useful for my purposes, beyond some information about social conditions in particular areas.

As anniversaries come around, some community and ex-army groups will publish the reminiscences from their members. For example, in 1993 the former members of the *tuyên truyền* Unit from the central region (Trung bộ), organised by Nguyễn Chí Thanh in 1945-1946, held a reunion in Huế and published a small booklet with reminiscences by each of the members who wished to do so. Some of the contributions are stories of remembered events and meetings, some are poems and a few songs are also included.⁹⁷ However, there is little in the way of general commentary or detail on the work of the group hence there is little of direct relevance for this thesis. In preparation for the anniversary of the birth of Hồ Chí Minh in 1990 many works were published, which recounted meetings with the President and discussed his work in various areas. A typical collection is accounts of meetings with Hồ Chí Minh at Tân Trào, which provides some useful background information and can be helpful in checking dates – particularly as some of the articles are reprints of material produced much closer to the events described.⁹⁸ Many similar works contain little that is of interest and, typically, some dates claimed have not been carefully checked and must be considered unreliable. There are many more in similar vein describing meetings with Hồ Chí Minh but some tend to be more in the nature of hagiography rather than serious attempts at analysis or description. Nevertheless, for some issues there may be no other sources available.

⁹⁵ Guy de Chaumont Guitry. *Lettres d'Indochine: De "Rhin et Danube à la Plaine des Joncs"*. (Originally published: 1951, Editions Alsatia, Paris). New York, NY: AMS Press Inc., 1975.

⁹⁶ Helmut Loofs-Wissowa (Edited by John Crocker). *A Peaceful Legionnaire: An Indochina sketchbook 1948-1954*. Canberra: Veritas Publishers, 2009.

⁹⁷ Phạm Gia Huân and Trịnh Nam Hải, eds. *Đội Tuyên truyền Xung phong Việt Minh Trung Bộ 1945-1946*, 2nd printing. Huế: Bảo tàng Thừa Thiên Huế for Ban Liên lạc Đội TTXP Việt Minh Trung Bộ, 1995.

⁹⁸ Đinh Lục, Trần Thị Lợi and Phạm Thị Thịnh, eds. *Bác Hồ ở Tân Trào*. Hanoi: NXB Chính Trị Quốc Gia for Bảo Tàng Tân Trào - ATK, 2001.

It is also sometimes possible to interview the few remaining people who were witnesses to the events, but memories fade and are embellished or overtaken by subsequent events, so the same care needs to be taken when interpreting interviews as with reminiscences..

The *Việt bắc*

Much of this thesis relates to activities in the far northern rural part of Vietnam, that part known as the *Việt bắc*. The far northern area of Vietnam had been known informally as the *Việt bắc* (northern *Việt*) for some time⁹⁹ but this name was formalised by decree number 127-SL¹⁰⁰ of 4 November 1949 when a number of provinces were grouped together as *Liên khu Việt bắc* (the term *Liên khu* is often translated as “Interzone” or “Unified area”).¹⁰¹ The provinces and area which comprised *Liên khu Việt bắc* are Cao Bằng, Bắc Kạn, Thái Nguyên, Phúc Yên, Lào Cai, Hà Giang, Yên Bái, Phú Thọ, Tuyên Quang and Vĩnh Yên. Lạng Sơn, Bắc Giang, Bắc Ninh, Hải Ninh, Quảng Yên and special area Hòn Gay was added later. Over time, some changes were made to the names of some of these provinces as new provinces were excised from existing ones and others amalgamated.¹⁰²

The area is diverse and ranges from river flats and wet-rice cultivation to limestone karst mountains where agriculture is very difficult. Farming methods over this wide area are also diverse and include wet-rice, dry area farming and even swidden agriculture in the mountains. Most people in the *Việt bắc* live in traditional villages, even today, the village (*làng*) being seen as “the basic cell of Vietnamese society”, and this is particularly

⁹⁹ For example, the history of the People’s Army of Vietnam describes the developing revolutionary movement and the French worries about the *Việt bắc* in 1943, even though guerilla bases had only been set up in Cao Bằng and Bắc Sơn, with Lạng Sơn added later. See Ban Nghiên cứu Lịch sử Quân Đội, ed. *Lịch sử Quân Đội Nhân dân Việt Nam*, 3rd edition, Vol. 1 of 2. Hanoi: NXB Quân Đội Nhân dân, 1977, pp. 100-101.

¹⁰⁰ Decrees and laws of Vietnam are available at <http://thuvienphapluat.vn>.

¹⁰¹ Lockhart shows five provinces comprising the *Việt bắc* as at May-August 1945 in an unattributed map. See Greg Lockhart. *Nation in Arms: The origins of the People's Army of Vietnam*. Sydney: Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with Allen & Unwin, 1989, p. 107.

¹⁰² Nguyễn Quang Ân. *Việt Nam. Những Thay đổi Địa danh và Giới Hành chính 1945-2002*. Hanoi: NXB Thông Tấn, 2003, pp. 53-55.

true for the period under study here.¹⁰³ The northern area is also home to a number of minority ethnic groups. For example, of the 48 representatives from the *Việt bắc* provinces listed above in a People's Assembly that was proposed in October 1945, seven seats were to be reserved for people of *Thổ* ethnicity, two for *Mão* people, three from the *Nùng* people and one for the *Mường* ethnicity. The remainder were to be reserved for people of any ethnicity, including the majority *Kinh (Việt)* people.¹⁰⁴

These two features, the villages and the diverse ethnicity, are characteristic of the *Việt bắc* and Chapters 3, 4 and 6 show how these two were used effectively in the development of the mobilisation material targeted specifically at people in that area.

Outline

Two threads work their way through this thesis. On the one hand, there is the intellectual response, largely from writers and artists, to the move for independence and the possible need for a “new art” and, indeed, a “new life” supplanting the sometimes tepid French-influenced Colonial art and writing. On the other hand are the responses founded on folk arts, including poetry and song, which occur more commonly in the rural areas. There is almost a city/country dichotomy reflected in a classical/folk divide of two common traditions, a dichotomy disturbed by the exodus of artists and writers from the cities following the outbreak of the Resistance in December 1946. The connection between the two, the folk traditions and educated city-based arts, is explored further in Chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 2 explores the environment for *tuyên truyền* in the 1930s and shows how much of the mobilisation material produced by those who were working for Vietnamese independence missed its mark, some of it being more-or-less directly imported from Europe and the USSR and directed towards urban factory workers. Some of this early material would have found its mark in the (few) factories in Vietnam and on the

¹⁰³ Nguyễn Từ Chi (1980). “The Traditional Viet Village in Bac Bo: Its Organizational Structure and Problems”, in *The Traditional Village in Vietnam*, pp. 43-142, p. 47. See also Nguyễn Khắc Tụng (1981). “The Village: Settlement of Peasants in Northern Vietnam”, in *The Traditional Village in Vietnam*, pp. 7-43, for a discussion of the different types of village to be found in northern Vietnam..

¹⁰⁴ See decree 51 of 17 October 1945. This decree was a statement of intent and the Assembly did not actually meet until March 1946.

plantations, where there was considerable unrest at labour conditions, but much of it did not address aspirations of the peasantry, nor did address the independence question adequately. Chapters 3 and 4 show a marked change in *tuyên truyền* in the 1940s, as Hồ Chí Minh returned to Vietnam and gave his attention and intellect to the problem of engaging the rural population. Some of his simple and yet effective publications – newspapers and pamphlets – from the period are analysed in these chapters. Việt Minh activity in *tuyên truyền* during the first half of the 1940s culminated in the Revolution of August 1945¹⁰⁵ and the Declaration of Independence of 2 September 1945.

Chapter 5 takes up the theme of the response of intellectuals, writers and artists towards the independence movement and shows how the Việt Minh revolutionaries and intellectuals were influenced by their counterparts in China and elsewhere. Chapter 6 is a close examination of some of the more interesting examples of *tuyên truyền* that were used in the *Việt bắc* and puts them into the context of the Resistance. Examples studied relate to the family, the village and to the military.

¹⁰⁵ Some authors dispute the use of “revolution” to describe the events of August 1945, but this is the term employed in Vietnam.

Chapter 2

Identifying the Target, Finding the Language

In the period prior to the Second World War, many Vietnamese wanted change to the colonial situation, many wanted radical change. There were diverse groups of political parties, secret societies, writers groups, student groups, artists, all with a story to tell and all trying to win support for a point of view. During the 1920s and 1930s some very large demonstrations and protests took place as some groups were able to succeed in mobilising large numbers of people to take part, often at great physical danger to themselves. What was the material used to mobilise these people and where did it come from? What was the role of the Communist Party and the international Communist movement in the design and production of *tuyên truyền*? These questions are investigated in this chapter.

A warning about sources is necessary. The posters and leaflets studied in the later stages of this chapter were obtained either from one of two published works which are detailed below, or were copied from the holdings of the Museum of the Revolution in Hanoi. In all cases, the present-day Communist Party of Vietnam is ultimately responsible for the production or the archival care of these sources and it is probable that some prior selection has occurred which may slant the narrative where it concerns the role of the Party in production of the mobilisation material.

Historical Perspective

Tradition has it that Marshal Lý Thường Kiệt read the following poem to his troops in 1076, urging them to resist Chinese aggression. The original was written in Hán Chinese and has been transliterated as follows:

*Nam quốc sơn hà nam đế cư
Tiệt nhiên định phận tại thiên thư
Như hà nghịch lỗ lai xâm phạm
Nhữ đẳng hành khan thủ bại hư.*

Translated into Vietnamese it becomes:

*Sông núi nước Nam, vua Nam ở
Rành rành định phận tại sách trời
Cớ sao lũ giặc sang xâm phạm?
Chúng bay sẽ bị đánh tơi bời.*

and in English:

The Southern emperor rules the Southern land.
Our destiny is writ in Heaven's Book.
How dare ye bandits trespass on our soil?
Ye shall meet your undoing at our hands!¹

This verse is popularly seen as the first declaration of the independence of Vietnam from China. The “Southern emperor” and the “Southern land” here are references to Vietnam, vis-à-vis China, the “northern land”, and the “land” here is either “*sông núi*”, in Vietnamese, or “*son hà*” in Chinese (Sino-Việt), both of which refer to mountains and rivers, symbolic of the Vietnamese countryside. The fact that it was written in poetry is significant. Poetry has been used in Vietnam to protest unwelcome attention from invaders or potential invaders for millenia and there are many examples from all periods of Vietnamese history, written either in Chinese or a demotic script, expressing similar sentiments to those of Lý Thường Kiệt in the verse quoted above.²

Early Protests Against French Colonialism

The arrival of French colonialism was marked by the appearance of more protest poetry against both the colonial masters and the mandarin class who supported them. The poetry was written in Chinese, *Nôm* or *quốc ngữ* characters and used poetic forms derived from the classical Chinese forms or, more frequently, the popular Vietnamese *lục-bát* (6-8) form. Protest about taxation was a common complaint, as in this example extracted from a much longer poem:

...
Tax on rice, vegetables; tax on paddy; tax on cotton
Tax on silk; tax on iron; tax on bronze
Tax on birds; tax on fish throughout the three regions
Nobody can enumerate all the various kinds of taxes
The most stunning tax is on defecation

¹ Huỳnh Sanh Thông, ed. *An Anthology of Vietnamese Poems: From the Eleventh through the Twentieth Centuries*, translated by Huỳnh Sanh Thông. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996. Translation by Huỳnh Sanh Thông. The form of this verse is based on the Chinese *lǔ-shih* formal verse form but later poetry uses other Vietnamese forms. This matter is raised further in Chapter 5.

² See, for example, Nguyễn Bình Phương, Nguyễn Tiến Hải, Nguyễn Hữu Quý and Đặng Việt Thủy, eds. *Việt Nam - Thơ Chiến Tranh (Một phần Lịch sử Việt Nam qua thơ) (Tuyển)*. Hanoi: NXB Quân đội Nhân dân, 2008. This publication also contains a copy of Lý Thường Kiệt's declaration on p. 7.

It is too painful to talk about all these things
...³

Other poems addressed the loss of the soul of the nation, such as the long poem *Chiêu hồn nước* (“Appeal to the Soul of the Nation”) written by the 15-year old Phạm Tất Đắc (1909-1935), which begins:

Twenty-five million children and adults, men and women
For four thousand years, we descend from the Hong Bang⁴
We have homes, where have they vanished
We have a country, why is it now lost
O Heaven!
...⁵

Published poetry, and other general literary activity, was a part of the protest against colonialism until the censorship imposed during the Second World War but folk poetry continued to be created and recited in the countryside and many examples are shown and discussed further in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 following.

The French took Vietnam by force of arms and were consequently met with armed resistance from the very start. In their occupation of Vietnam, they were constantly troubled by what the colonial administration referred to as “pirates” and “bandits” – groups of fighters whose aim was to at least disrupt, if not end, French dominance and that would, in present-day Vietnam, be more likely to be described as “independence fighters” or “patriots”. The situation in the 1880s was further complicated by the “poor performance” (from the French perspective) of the Vietnamese Imperial Government installed by the French colonial authorities with its capital in Huế, and by the Franco-Chinese war (1884-1885). The character of the resistance and the motivations of the fighters were initially largely unknown to the French colonial authorities, but some information was gleaned from European missionaries who were living in the countryside.

³ Truong Buu Lam. *Colonialism Experienced: Vietnamese Writings on Colonialism, 1900-1931*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000, p. 88.

⁴ Refers to the (probably mythical) dynasty of the “18” Hùng kings who ruled over Đại Việt (Vietnam) from 2879 BCE to 258 BCE. See Truong Buu Lam, *Colonialism Experienced*, p 232, Hà Văn Thư and Trần Hồng Đức. *A Brief Chronology of Vietnam's History*. Hanoi: NXB Thế Giới, 2000, pp. 3-5 and Hà Văn Thư and Trần Hồng Đức. *Tóm tắt Niên biểu Lịch sử Việt Nam*, 12th edition. Hà Nội: NXB Văn hóa-Thông tin, 2005.

⁵ Phạm Tất Đắc (1926). “An Appeal to the Soul of the Nation”, Document 11, in *Colonialism Experienced: Vietnamese Writings on Colonialism, 1900-1931*, pp. 228-233, edited by Truong Buu Lam. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000, p. 229.

For example, a French administrator named Miribel,⁶ working in the Hưng Yên region and writing in the late nineteenth Century, found that some of the “bandit leaders” were not merely opportunistic thieves. He described his experiences:

Tan Thuat and Cu Duc were the apostles. They visited the villages, got the notables together and inspired fervent patriotism in the hearts of everyone. Both these men were completely selfless and showed the greatest gentleness toward their fellow man. They preached resistance against the foreigner but tried to win over their partisans through persuasion rather than by terror.⁷

Dr Édouard Hocquard, a French medical doctor serving with the French troops in Tonkin in 1884 and 1885, the years of the Franco-Chinese war, was aware that the colonial administration did not have a good understanding of their native subjects and that there was a need to develop a deeper understanding into the political and social situation in Indochina. He knew that the French colonisers were having difficulty in winning the trust of the Vietnamese leaders (he uses the French term, Annamese, for what we now call Vietnamese), and in discussing the need to control the “bandits” and “pirates”, he writes:

...in particular we need to be able to count on the Annamese officials, but the latter, despite their wonderful declarations of faith and their protestations of interest, are in their hearts completely hostile to us.⁸

Much of the resistance of the early period originated from scholars (the *văn thân*), the men of letters who were trained in classical Chinese and who lived and taught in the villages, and their “preaching” of resistance was not at all organised on a large scale in the way that later actors were able to achieve and which is the subject of study in later chapters. Much of the resistance also came from the upper levels of the French-controlled Royal Vietnamese administration and was aimed at discrediting the French in the eyes of the populace. Édouard Hocquard writes further:

⁶ This is probably the far-sighted Artus de Miribel who later became the Administrator for Hải Dương province. See Van Nguyen-Marshall. “The Moral Economy of Colonialism: Subsistence and Famine Relief in French Indo-China, 1906-1917”, *The International History Review*, vol. 27, no. 2 (Jun, 2005): 237-258, p. 253.

⁷ Quoted in Nguyen Khac Vien (1964). “Water, Rice and Men”, in *Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam*, pp. 75-126, edited by David Marr and Jayne Werner. Berkeley: Indochina Resource Center, 1974, p. 109.

⁸ Dr. Édouard Hocquard. *War and Peace in Hanoi and Tonkin: A Field Report of the Franco-Chinese War and on Customs and Beliefs of the Vietnamese (1884-1885)*, Translated by Walter E. J. Tips. (Originally published: *Trente Mois au Tonkin*, in *Le Tour du Monde*, Vols 57-61, 1888-91, Paris). Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1999, p. 482.

The Annamese officials are encouraged to act like this by the government of Hué; Thuong, the Regent ... has, with the men of letters of all categories acting as intermediaries, engaged in a silent battle against our government with the objective not only of stopping us by all means possible from bringing peace to the country, but especially of discrediting us in the eyes of the people by showing them our powerlessness.⁹

This sullen silent resistance sometimes broke out into demonstrations but was more commonly expressed in written form, often as essays, stories and poetry.

Most of the written material produced during the early part of the 20th Century was not written to be *tuyên truyền* (propaganda) as such, but it was certainly aimed at mobilising people to think and work towards an end to colonialism. Some of the works produced comprised aspirational proclamations and the like from organisations hoping for political power. Truong Buu Lam has collected some examples of statements produced in the period from the early 1900s to the 1930s from organised groups and individuals.¹⁰ In 1912 Hoàng Trọng Mậu (1874-1916, Nghệ An) wrote a proclamation for an association seeking the “restoration of Vietnam”¹¹ and in 1917 there was a small rebellion, in the form of a mutiny, in Thái Nguyên province and a proclamation announcing “a new nation that will last for thousands more years” was issued by the rebels.¹² Political parties in the 1920s and early 1930 also issued their proclamations; the Vietnamese Party for Independence,¹³ the Nationalist Party of Vietnam¹⁴ and the Communist Party¹⁵ all released documents in the form of calls to the French colonial authorities, the “people” or as manifestos. All of these documents call for an end to colonialism, for the French to go home, and for Vietnam to become independent, although not all of them have a vision as to what an independent Vietnam would look like. The material that was produced in this early period is a

⁹ Hocquard *War and Peace in Hanoi and Tonkin*, p. 483.

¹⁰ See Truong Buu Lam. *Colonialism Experienced: Vietnamese Writings on Colonialism, 1900-1931*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000, pp. 105-298.

¹¹ Hoang Trong Mau (1912). “Proclamation of the Association for the Restoration of Vietnam”, Document 5, in *Colonialism Experienced*, pp. 162-164, edited by Truong Buu Lam.

¹² “The Thai Nguyen Uprising: Proclamation” (1917). Document 8, in *Colonialism Experienced*, pp. 186-189, edited by Truong Buu Lam.

¹³ “The Vietnamese Party for Independence: Memorandum to the French Minister of Colonies” (1927). Document 13, in *Colonialism Experienced*, pp. 238-247, edited by Truong Buu Lam.

¹⁴ “The Nationalist Party of Vietnam (Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang): Proclamation to the People” (1927). Document 14, in *Colonialism Experienced*, pp. 248-250, edited by Truong Buu Lam.

¹⁵ Tran Phu (1930). “The Political Theses of the Indochinese Communist Party”, Document 19, in *Colonialism Experienced*, pp. 280-291, edited by Truong Buu Lam.

precursor to the *tuyên truyền* of the 1930s and the much more sophisticated *tuyên truyền* which began to appear in the 1940s.

A New Awakening

The years 1925-1926 marked a turning point in Vietnamese opposition to French rule almost amounting to a “changing of the guard”. Those years saw the trial and jailing of the scholar and patriot Phan Bội Châu in November 1925 and the death and funeral of Phan Chu Trinh (also known as Phan Châu Trinh) in March of the following year and the change in the attitude of the population was exemplified by the reaction to these events particularly by young people and students, and especially shown by the outpouring of grief at the funeral of Phan Chu Trinh.¹⁶ These two old scholars had both been very important contributors to the debates in the first two decades of the 20th Century and both worked to inspire others to strive for an independent Vietnam. Both saw the French colonisers and the Vietnamese monarchy as institutions standing in the way of the modernisation of Vietnam, Phan Bội Châu arguing for expelling the French, using violence if necessary, and then getting rid of the Monarchy, and Phan Chu Trinh arguing for the same, but in the reverse order and eschewing the use of violence.¹⁷ Both left a considerable amount of written material and there is an extensive body of literature concerning their work.¹⁸ The jailing of the one and the death of the other led to an unprecedented arousal of youthful awareness and activity. For example, in response to the death of Phan Chu Trinh a young man called for action – the 24-year old Trần Huy Liệu, who was later to become the Minister for Propaganda and Mobilisation, wrote:

It is good to mourn Phan Chu Trinh by voice and by pen, but above all we must demonstrate our affection in the form of action... One, ten, one hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred thousand people should

¹⁶ David G. Marr. *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981, pp. 15-23.

¹⁷ Phan Bội Châu (1929). *Overtaken Chariot: The Autobiography of Phan Bội Châu*, translated by Vinh Sinh and Nicholas Wickenden. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999, p. 109.

¹⁸ See, for example, Nguyễn Thị Hồng Vân, ed. *Phong trào Đông Du và Phan Bội Châu* [The “Study Overseas” Movement and Phan Bội Châu]. Hanoi: NXB Nghệ An for Trung Tâm Văn Hóa Ngôn Ngữ Đông Tây, 2005. Phan Bội Châu's work is also mentioned extensively in David Marr's seminal works on Vietnamese anti-colonialism: David G. Marr. *Vietnamese Anticolonialism 1885 - 1925*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971 and Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*. Phan Bội Châu's autobiography is also available, see Phan Bội Châu (1929). *Overtaken Chariot*.

combine all their love for Phan Chu Trinh into a democratic army to destroy the citadels of oppression and injustice. Surely that would cause Phan's spirit to smile and say "Great! Wonderful!"... Among our countrymen, who is prepared to remember Phan Chu Trinh in this way?¹⁹

He was expressing his thoughts to the nascent nation as much as to the 60,000 mourners who attended Phan Chu Trinh's funeral,²⁰ which was probably the first powerful public expression of nationalism that Vietnam had ever seen up to that time.²¹

Two groups of writers active in the 1930s can be distinguished, both arising from the "city petty bourgeoisie" but the vast majority of the population, the rural masses, were little more than a backdrop.²² On the one hand there was a radical and Marxist-inspired group, many of whom had experienced jail under French authorities, some had studied at Hanoi University and high schools in other cities, and had become radicalised in their outlook, writing against the old "feudal" regime of Vietnam as much as against colonialism. On the other hand, there was another group who adopted a more liberal pro-Western view, those who had been educated in France and who still held out hope that Vietnam could become a liberal democracy along French lines.²³ Trinh Van Thao sees the first group as the descendants of the *Cần Vương* movement ("Save the King" – using the Vietnamese monarchy to defeat colonialism) and the *Việt Nam Duy Tân Hội* ("New Vietnam Association" – founded by Phan Bội Châu) movement. The second group is seen as more westernised, and represented by those in the *Tự Lực Văn Đoàn* (self-reliant) literary group, writing for publications such as *La Lutte* (The Struggle), to which the

¹⁹ Trần Huy Liệu. *Tiểu Sử Ông Phan Châu Trinh* [Biography of Phan Chu Trinh]. Saigon, 1926, pp. 115, 201-203, quoted in Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, p. 23. Translator unknown.

²⁰ Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, p. 21. Vinh Sinh and Nicholas Wickenden claim 14,000 people at the Saigon funeral but many more mourners throughout Vietnam. See Vinh Sinh and Nicholas Wickenden (1998). "Introduction", in *Overtured Chariot: The Autobiography of Phan Bội Châu*, pp. 1-37. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999, p. 23.

²¹ See Vinh Sinh and Nicholas Wickenden, "Introduction", in *Overtured Chariot*, p. 23.

²² Nguyễn Khắc Viện. "Historical Background", translated by Mary Cowen, Carolyn Swetland, Đặng Thế Bình, Paddy Farrington, Elizabeth Hodgkin and Hữu Ngọc, Part One, in *Vietnamese Literature: Historical Background and Texts*, pp. 33-192, edited by Nguyễn Khắc Viện and Hữu Ngọc. Hanoi: Red River Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1976.

²³ See Trinh Van Thao. "The 1925 Generation of Vietnamese Intellectuals and Their Role in the Struggle for Independence", Chapter 8, in *Việt Nam Exposé: French Scholarship on Twentieth-Century Vietnamese Society*, pp. 251-277, edited by Gisele Bousquet and Pierre Brocheux. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002, pp. 257-258.

Communists also contributed.²⁴ These two groups were somewhat ill-defined in their membership and it would be hard to assign many writers exclusively to one group or the other.

In dealing with written material protesting against their presence, the French authorities were active in censorship but were more likely to censor descriptions of peasant conditions, particularly regarding taxation, if it was written as an “essay” or “opinion piece”, but would allow the same material to be published if it was in the form of a novel or short story. Compare, for example, the description of the brutality and callousness of the taxation and the tax collections systems in Nguyễn Công Hoan’s short story “Dead End”, which is discussed in more detail below,²⁵ with the reasoned arguments put forward in an essay in the same year, 1938, by Hoàng Đạo,²⁶ advocating a fairer tax system and a less violent method of collection. Đạo’s work was banned, but Hoan’s was successfully published. Because of the selective work of French censorship, novels, short stories and poetry need to be used as source material if one wants to build a more complete picture of common attitudes towards French colonisation.²⁷

Thus, much of the written protest material from French colonial times is in the form of literature, mainly novels and poetry, because of heavy French censorship of essays or opinion pieces. The writing of those Vietnamese who were in a position to be able to articulate Vietnamese thoughts about the colonial situation, were often more concerned for the loss of the country and the issues of heavy taxation and other matters to do with the

²⁴ Trinh Van Thao, *The 1925 Generation*, p. 258. Thao’s inclusion of writers for *La Lutte* in this group is contentious, but he defends that view pointing out the “predominance of values derived especially from French Revolution Jacobinism”, *ibid.*, p. 274

²⁵ See Nguyễn Công Hoan (1938). “Dead End (*Buoc Duong Cung*)”, in *Before the Revolution: The Vietnamese Peasants Under the French*, pp. 179-204, edited by Ngô Vinh Long. (Originally published: Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press 1973). New York: Columbia University Press, 1991. This story has also been published elsewhere.

²⁶ See Hoàng Đạo (1938). “Mud and Stagnant Water (*Bun Lay Nuoc Dong*)”, in *Before the Revolution: The Vietnamese Peasants Under the French*, pp. 205-218, edited by Ngô Vinh Long. (Originally published: Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press 1973). New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

²⁷ See Ngô Vinh Long. *Before the Revolution: The Vietnamese Peasants Under the French*, Morningside edition. (Originally published: Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press 1973). New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, pp. xxvi and 206. Neil Jamieson has written an excellent literary commentary on French colonialism during the 1920s and 1930s and his survey is a good source of Vietnamese views concerning French colonialism, particularly the views of those Vietnamese who were living in the cities. See Neil L. Jamieson. *Understanding Vietnam*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, especially pp. 100-175.

colonial situation. For example, shortly after the death of the Phan Chu Trinh in 1926, the young scholar Phạm Tất Đắc wrote his “Appeal to the Soul of the Nation”, the first stanzas of which are quoted on page 29 above. The allusions he uses, such as to “*Hồng Bàng*”, “*Âu Lạc*”, “the dragon (*Lạc Long Quân*) and the fairy (*Âu Cơ*)”, are references to Vietnamese mythical origins and commonly appear in literary expressions of dissatisfaction of the period but occur rarely, if at all, in the organised propaganda of the 1930s from the political parties, including that from the Communist Party. Some of these points are explored below and the literature is discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

Three Defining Events of the 1930s

Writing about the French prison system in Indochina, the early 1930s is described by Peter Zinoman as “The Great Confinement”.²⁸ In a mere three years, from December 1929 to December 1932, the prison population in Vietnam grew by 75 percent, to 28,097, due partly to increased crime as a result of the Depression but, more importantly, by the increase in political activity against colonialism and the subsequent French response.²⁹ This increase in political activity, and French repression, during the early part of the 1930s can be seen clearly in Table 2-1, particularly noting the increase in arrests and strikes between the years 1927 and 1931. There were three events during this period which stand out for the production of agitation material (*tuyên truyền*): the mutiny at Yên Bái in February 1930;³⁰ the uprisings in Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh provinces in 1930-1931;³¹ and the formation of the Popular Front Government in France in June 1936.³² The uprisings in Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh resulted briefly in the formation of “soviets” in the two provinces and the entire movement is thus usually referred to as the Nghệ-Tĩnh Soviets.

²⁸ Peter Zinoman. *The Colonial Bastille: A history of imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862-1940*. Berkely: University of California Press, 2001, p. 202.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 205.

³⁰ See Hy V. Luong. *Revolution in the Village: Tradition and Transformation in North Vietnam, 1925-1988*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992, pp. 23-34 for an account of the uprising, the following pages detail the French reprisals.

³¹ See Ngo Vinh Long. “The Indochinese Communist Party and Peasant Rebellion in Central Vietnam 1930-31” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, vol. 10, no. 4 (October-December, 1978): 15-35 for a full account of the Nghệ-Tĩnh revolts. There is also an excellent account in Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, pp 378-387.

³² See Maurice Agulhon. *The French Republic 1879-1992*, translated by Antonia Nevill. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990, p. 234.

Table 2-1: Strikes and arrests in the late 1920s and early 1930s³³

	1927	1929	1930	1931
Number of strikes	7	24	98	n.a. ³⁴
Number of workers involved	350	>6,000	31,680	n.a.
Number of arrests	n.a.	1,490	2,963	51,000
Number killed or sentenced to death	n.a.	3	772	at least 2,000

Some Vietnamese commentators identify another period of political activity from 1932 to 1935 which is called the *phát triển phong trào cách mạng* (“development of the revolutionary movement”),³⁵ but there is no evidence of an increase in agitation activity over this period, in fact the material that I have indicates a diminution of activity. It is possible that they are referring to underground activity that did not result in the production of overt *tuyên truyền* or other mobilisation activities but nevertheless served to radicalise some, particularly those who were imprisoned by the French. However French repression of the Communist Party in 1931 after the Nghệ-Tĩnh Soviets was so severe that there was very little of the leadership left inside Vietnam that was not in jail to direct and encourage any revolutionary movement.³⁶

The three events are significant in the development of mobilisation materials and techniques and, later in this Chapter, it will be shown that the propaganda produced and disseminated during the 1930s was clearly influenced by these three events. *Tuyên truyền* was instrumental in the successes and failures of two of these events. For example, the failure of the Yên Bái uprising was a failure to arouse the surrounding populace and even potential participants who were specific targets of the propaganda, Vietnamese working in the colonial army, were not moved enough to join in more than half-heartedly.³⁷ The Nghệ-Tĩnh rebellion, on the other hand, produced slogans and, purportedly, leaflets which

³³ Adapted from William J. Duiker. *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam, 1900-1941*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1976, p. 218, Nguyễn Khắc Viện. *Vietnam: A Long History, 7th edition*. (Originally published: 1987 (Revised and expanded: Additional material and notes provided by Mai Lý Quảng)). Hà Nội: NXB Thế Giới, 2007, p. 191 and William J. Duiker. *Ho Chi Minh*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2000, p. 197.

³⁴ These figures agree with those in Ngo Vinh Long, *The Indochinese Communist Party and Peasant Rebellion*, see p. 17. Long records an additional 535 peasant demonstrations.

³⁵ See, for example, Phạm Mai Hùng. “Lời Giới Thiệu”, in *Truyền Đơn Cách Mạng Trước Tháng 9 Năm 1945*, pp. 7-10, edited by Phạm Mai Hùng, Triệu Hiến, Trần Hải Nhị, Nguyễn Thị Sáu, Nguyễn Trọng Hậu and Ngô Thị Ba. Hà Nội: NXB Chính Trị Quốc Gia for the Bảo Tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2004, p. 9.

³⁶ See Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, p.197.

³⁷ Hy Van Luong, *Revolution in the Village*, pp. 28-31.

were used to mobilise large sections of the population. However, as will be shown later, much of the mobilisation material produced during this period, and for some time afterwards, failed to find its mark amongst the rural peasant population. The third event, the formation of a Popular Front Government in France, resulted in the renewed production of material – largely leaflets – designed for mobilisation and motivation but some of this material was less well-directed than later propaganda and failed to reach the target that was ultimately to prove decisive, that is the rural majority in Vietnam.

The Yên Bái affair was not, in itself, a large event, although it marked the first time that members of the French-educated intelligentsia played an active role in Vietnamese anti-colonialist movements.³⁸ The uprising began on the 9th February 1930 when villagers made their way to Yên Bái intent on staging an uprising in conjunction with mutinous soldiers from the colonial army.³⁹ Some small towns, such as Lâm Thao in Phú Thọ province were captured briefly by rebel army troops and sympathetic villagers,⁴⁰ and the main provincial town of Yên Bái was held by the rebels only for the night of 9 February 1930 and part of the following day. The colonial armed forces were not united in their support for the insurrection, in spite of agitation before the event, and many of the Vietnamese recruited into the colonial army supported the French. The uprising was not well planned and remaining French forces in Yên Bái were able to use the telegraph to ask for air support, which largely finished the insurrection.⁴¹

The Vietnam Nationalist Party (VNP – *Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng*) was the main organisation behind the Yên Bái rebellion and French retaliation against the party was severe, most of the leaders, including the party president Nguyễn Thái Học, being arrested with many of them, including Học, subsequently executed.⁴² Most surviving members of the now fractured party fled to Yunnan in China and the party ceased to be an effective political force in Vietnam. The VNP was mainly attractive to those people who were products of the French schools, school teachers, government clerks and petty merchants,

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 23.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 96.

those who lived in the cities, and it made little attempt to attract the large majority of the peasant masses to the nationalist cause.⁴³ Nevertheless, the VNP should be seen as part of a new direction in the move towards independence in Vietnam, away from the scholars' protests by people such as Phan Bội Châu and Phan Chu Trinh and away from the literary protests, a step towards overt political action, mainly on the part of young people.

The most important and far-reaching protests of the early 1930s occurred as the series of events often referred to as the Nghệ-Tĩnh Soviets.⁴⁴ The peasants of the two provinces of Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh already had a history of protest and organisation dating back at least to the 1920s⁴⁵ and the 1st May 1930 marked the start of a new wave of widespread and powerful protests:

The first wave of coordinated demonstrations occurred on May 1, 1930, and involved 10,000 peasants and 1,200 workers from the two provinces of Nghe-an and Ha-tinh. The peasants marched five abreast in a kilometer-long column to the office of the French Resident of Nghe-an in the city of Vinh.⁴⁶

Both industrial workers and peasants were involved and they marched under the hammer-and-sickle banner of the Communist Party. Other demonstrations occurred on the same day at Bến Thủy (400 demonstrators, four killed, seven wounded in the first foray, followed by 1,500 demonstrators, seven of whom were killed and another 18 wounded in a later event), and in Tân Kỳ district (3000 demonstrators). Even bolder demonstrations occurred on the same day in the two villages of Hanh Lam and Yên Lạc, near the city of Vinh. There, the villagers actually destroyed the buildings on a plantation concession belonging to a Ky Vien "a former secretary in the French administration".⁴⁷ They were protesting the usurpation of their lands and the blocking of access to a forest. The peasants of these two villages were willing to stand up to French forces and replied defiantly to questioning from Inspector Petit, leader of a military expedition sent by the French Resident of Vinh to quell the trouble:

⁴³ Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam*, pp. 164-165.

⁴⁴ See Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, pp 380-387.

⁴⁵ Ngo Vinh Long, *The Indochinese Communist Party and Peasant Rebellion*, p. 18.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

When [Petit] asked who burned the concession, the reply was: “All of us and the inhabitants of Yen-lac committed this act, and we all assume the responsibility for it.” Question: “Besides you, there were about 20 individuals who were strangers to the villages of Hanh-lam and Yen-lac” Answer: “That’s not true”.⁴⁸

The aggrieved peasants of the two villages twice claimed that this direct action was carried out entirely by them, but we cannot tell if prior agitation by political agents initiated the action. In any case their cause seems to have been deeply felt, as the Resident of Nghệ An reported that the next day Inspector Petit was invited by the peasants to “Kill us! Release the village officials or else arrest the 3,000 of us”. In the event, “only 16 persons were killed”, although later investigations by the French Colonial Sûreté claimed 20 dead.⁴⁹ Many more incidents of such small-scale activism, where villagers took matters into their own hands and destroyed property and carried out executions, were reported.⁵⁰

The end of May and beginning of June 1930 saw a second wave of demonstrations in Bến Thủy, Thanh Chương, Đô Lương and Anh Sơn. Strikes broke out in the city of Vinh in July and demonstrations continued through August, 10,000 demonstrating in Thanh Chương on 12 August 1930 with an unknown number killed by French aeroplane fire and bombing. Demonstrations became more violent during late August and September and many district officials handed over their seals of authority to hastily-formed Red Peasant Associations. The actual “Nghệ-Tĩnh Soviet movement” is said to have begun in a fierce and large struggle in Hưng Nguyên district near Vinh on 12 September 1930 when twenty thousand peasant demonstrators marched on Vinh.⁵¹ By October, French reports were stating that “a ‘Bolshevik regime’ had been set up in Nam-dan and Do-luong; ‘Soviets’ were elected by the population and market taxes were abolished. Revolutionary tribunals tried Government agents”.⁵² Communist Party involvement in actual planning of the soviets is questionable as the Party had only minimal resources and structures in place at that time. Ngo Vinh Long, quoting from Trường Chinh writing in *Nghiên cứu Lịch sử* (The Journal of Historical Research), points out:

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵⁰ Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, pp. 176-177.

⁵¹ Ngo Vinh Long, *The Indochinese Communist Party and Peasant Rebellion*, p. 22.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 22.

The “soviets” thus did not materialize as a result of careful planning by the Communist Party but as a result of the disintegration of the colonial administrative structures caused by the peasant struggle led by local and regional communist cadres.⁵³

In addition, looking back on the events thirteen years later in the leading article written on 21 September 1943 to commemorate the soviets, the *Việt Minh* newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* does not credit the Communist Party with involvement in the organisation of the soviet movements, but does mention “revolutionaries” and “striking workers”.⁵⁴ Even so, the soviets were strongly supported by the newly-formed Communist Party. It was during this period of widespread direct action and demonstrations in Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh, October 1930, that the Central Committee of the VCP held its First Plenum in Saigon to try to better coordinate activity between the Central Committee and local committees, and the name-change to the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) occurred.⁵⁵ Sophie Quinn-Judge points out that the Communist Party had well-developed plans for uprisings in Nghệ-Tĩnh and that the tactics used “were ones which had been taught to peasant organizers since the early 1920s at Peng Pei’s Peasant Institute”.⁵⁶ She concludes “rather than following the peasantry, the communists had developed organizing methods which were well suited to the local conditions, at least in the short term”. She goes on to state that “However, it [the Nghệ-Tĩnh uprising] would not have taken place in the form it did had communist organisers not been in command”.⁵⁷ Trường Chinh’s statement above casts some doubt as to the extent of the Communist organisers being “in command”.

Thus the mobilisation activity itself was very successful, with the French estimating that 60 percent of the inhabitants of Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh were enrolled in “Red” organisations by February 1931.⁵⁸ French reaction was severe and unrelenting. Many of the leaders were arrested, and the main villages were occupied militarily. Famine hit in mid-1931, Nghệ An being one of the provinces worst affected, and the French

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 24.

⁵⁴ See Phạm Mai Hùng (Head of Compilation Board). *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)* [The Newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* (1941-1945)]. (Originally published: as Newspaper series). Hanoi: NXB Lao Động for Bảo Tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2000, pp 301-302.

⁵⁵ Ngô Vinh Long, *The Indochinese Communist Party and Peasant Rebellion*, p. 25.

⁵⁶ Sophie Quinn-Judge. *Ho Chi Minh: the Missing Years 1919-1941*. London: Hurst & Company, 2003, p. 176.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p.177.

⁵⁸ Ngô Vinh Long, *The Indochinese Communist Party and Peasant Rebellion*, p. 27.

administration exacerbated the situation by forcing an early tax collection, further impoverishing many peasants who were then forced to sell production equipment and animals to raise cash in order to pay their taxes (which had to be paid in piastres) and to buy food.⁵⁹ By the end of July 1931, it was apparent that the Nghệ-Tĩnh soviets were finished,⁶⁰ but methods of agitating amongst the peasantry and of mobilising the rural masses had been tried, mistakes and misjudgements made and new ideas developed.

By the mid-1930s the political situation in the colonies had changed, with the rise of a left-leaning government in France. Political events in France in the 1930s were dominated by the rise of racial fascism in Europe, particularly in Italy, Germany and Spain, and by the remilitarisation of the old enemy Germany.⁶¹ The French Communist Party was drawn away from internationalisation and more towards the nationalist sympathies of other left-wing parties⁶² and in April and May 1936 the elections returned a majority of left-wing parties in a coalition known as the Popular Front. Of the total of 615 deputies, the Front numbered 376 comprising 72 Communists, 147 from the Socialist Party, 106 radicals and 51 members of minor left-wing parties.⁶³ The Front was led by Léon Blum, a socialist who had sympathies for the people colonised by France, and who had met Nguyễn Ái Quốc (Hồ Chí Minh) at the Socialist Congress of Tours on 25 December 1920.⁶⁴ Blum's ideas on colonisation are illustrated by a piece that he wrote for *Le Populaire* on 5 July 1927:

We are still living with a set of ideas which have, in reality, changed very little since the time of slavery. The Black seems to us to have been created and placed on earth in order to work for the White. ... Nothing useful will be done as long as we have not attacked the notions which are the basis of colonization, and above all the idea of the natural inferiority of races justifying dependence and subordination.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 28.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 30.

⁶¹ See William Fortescue. *The Third Republic in France: Conflicts and Continuities*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000, pp. 214-219.

⁶² *ibid.*, pp. 221-222.

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 225.

⁶⁴ Jean Lacouture. *Léon Blum*, translated by George Holloch. New York, London: Holmes & Meier, 1982, pp. 131-132.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 531.

In keeping with these notions of the equality of all humankind, he appointed the socialist Marius Moutet as Minister of Colonies who ordered that censorship and restriction on native political parties and political activity be lifted. The Popular Front coalition began to break up in mid-1937 but, for that brief period, the relaxation of prohibitions on political activity in the Indochina colonies favoured the production of much mobilisation material and propaganda in Vietnam in an attempt to engage the native population. The results of this activity are apparent in the material which is analysed in the following sections.

However, by 1939, the Communist Party was banned in France, because of its support for the non-aggression pact between the USSR and Germany,⁶⁶ and similarly the Communist Party was banned in the French colonies.

As will be shown clearly in later chapters, the Indochinese Communist Party was able, in the long run, to recover and to make a strong connection with the masses in Vietnam, particularly in the rural areas of the north. The Party was first formed as the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP), partly in response to the working and living conditions in colonial Indochina, and was established in Hong Kong at a meeting held on 3 February 1930 by participants from three groups brought together by Nguyễn Ái Quốc. These groups were the Indochinese League, the Indochinese Communist Party and the Annam Communist Party, the last of these having been formed within the Revolutionary Youth League, the *Việt Nam Thanh niên Cách mệnh Đồng chí Hội*, a Marxist organisation created by Nguyễn Ái Quốc in 1925.⁶⁷ The resultant Party took the name *Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam* (Vietnamese Communist Party) but, as noted above, it changed its name at its first plenary meeting in October 1930 to *Đảng Cộng sản Đông Dương*, the “Indochinese Communist Party” (ICP).⁶⁸ It is this entity which was responsible for much of the agitation and mobilisation material which is the subject of later sections in this Chapter.

Communist Party mobilisation activities during the 1930s were largely directed from Hong Kong and Shanghai and conformed to Comintern practice and ideas. Much of the propaganda material was directed at agitation and propaganda (“agit-prop”) amongst the

⁶⁶ Fortescue, *The Third Republic in France*, p. 252.

⁶⁷ See Duiker. *Ho Chi Minh*, pp. 158-165.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 187.

soldiers of the French army. It was Hồ Chí Minh's view that promoting a revolution among Vietnamese soldiers in the French army would be productive in the struggle for independence. Sophie Quinn-Judge, writing about an essay of Hồ Chí Minh's, probably produced in the summer of 1930, states:

He devotes most of his attention to 'agit-prop in the army'. The native soldiers are conscripted from the villages and should not be treated as 'whole hunting dogs' of the imperialist, he says. At a demonstration in Cholon, he points out, the peasants made the mistake of insulting the soldiers instead of 'making propaganda to them'. In agit-prop work, he says, 'the party must propagate the programme "Bourgeois democratic revolution" among the soldiers, and utilize national sentiment to make them agree with the revolutionary movement of the workers and peasants and accept the leadership of the party'.⁶⁹

Hồ Chí Minh appears to have assigned people to work on propaganda up to and including 1930 aimed at soldiers of the French army (presumably native Vietnamese), including production of a French-language newspaper called *L'armée*, which appeared twice monthly.⁷⁰ As is shown in later chapters, some *tuyên truyền* was directed towards soldiers during the Second World War and right through the War of Resistance, urging them to turn their guns around against the French, and the Japanese before their defeat. If soldiers could be persuaded to defect then that would be a source of weapons for a growing nationalist army.

Agitation Materials – *Tuyên truyền*

Overview

The agitation materials from the period prior to 1941 were mainly in the form of leaflets – other forms of propaganda and mobilisation materials generally appeared after 1941 and are discussed in later chapters. I have access to three sources for the leaflets: (a) photographs I have taken at libraries in Vietnam and at the Museum of the Revolution in Hanoi; (b) a collection from the Vietnamese National Archives Number 1, published in

⁶⁹ Quinn-Judge, *Ho Chi Minh*, pp.172-173.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 173.

2001;⁷¹ (c) a collection from the Museum of the Revolution in Hanoi, published in 2004.⁷²

The collection from the Archives is replete with the dates and places of production of the material, but the Museum collection indicates dates mainly in the form of time periods, only 19 percent of the leaflets in the collection having a specified date of production, and the place of production is very rarely indicated. Neither of the collections has had a large print run (800 copies printed for the Archives collection and 600 for that from the Museum), hence copies may not be easily available. A possible source which I have not been able to access is material in French Archives, such as captured documents and mobilisation material. The numbers of leaflets for different years, where the date of production is known, is shown in Table 2-2 and only 28 of the 146 leaflets from the Museum's collection are represented in the table.

Table 2-2: *Numbers of leaflets by year*

Year	Archives Collection	Museum Collection	Total	Percent
1929	12	1	13	11%
1930	31	1	32	26%
1931	0	4	4	3%
1932	0	1	1	1%
1933	0	0	0	0%
1934	0	0	0	0%
1935	0	1	1	1%
1936	33	1	34	28%
1937	0	0	0	0%
1938	0	0	0	0%
1939	2	2	4	3%
1940	4	0	4	3%
1941	5	4	9	7%
1942	6	1	7	6%
1943	0	0	0	0%
1944	1	4	5	4%

⁷¹ Dương Văn Khảm, Ngô Thiếu Hiệu, Đào Thị Diễm, Vũ Văn Thuyền and Lê Huy Tuấn (Editorial Board). *Tuyên truyền cách mạng trước năm 1945, sưu tập tài liệu lưu trữ*. Hanoi: NXB Lao Động for Cục Lưu Trữ Nhà Nước Trung Tâm Lưu Trữ Quốc Gia I, 2001.

⁷² Phạm Mai Hùng, Triệu Hiến, Trần Hải Nhị, Nguyễn Thị Sáu, Nguyễn Trọng Hậu and Ngô Thị Ba (Compilers). *Truyền Đơn Cách Mạng Trước Tháng 9 Năm 1945* [Revolutionary Leaflets prior to September 1945]. Hà Nội: NXB Chính Trị Quốc Gia for the Bảo Tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2004.

Year	Archives Collection	Museum Collection	Total	Percent
1945	0	8	8	7%
Totals	94	28	122	100%

Because of this uncertainty surrounding the dates of leaflets in the Museum's collection, only general remarks can be made about patterns seen in the table. None of the leaflets in either the Museum or Archive collections, nor those in my photographic collection, relate directly to the Yên Bái mutiny and uprising but there is evidence that some agitation material was produced in association with that event.⁷³ Apart from that, there are obvious peaks in the production of leaflets at the time of the other two important events of the 1930s, the Nghệ-Tĩnh Soviets in 1930-1931 (40 percent of leaflets were produced in this period, if 1929 is included), and the Popular Front Government in France in 1936 (accounting for 28 percent of the leaflets that have survived), well over half (that is, 68 percent) of the production of leaflets occurring during the years of these two events.

Some of the early leaflets and pamphlets urge the celebration of particular events, many of which are international events, not directly related to Vietnam. The events typically being commemorated in the earliest posters are chosen from the Russian or international revolutionary history. Of the 146 leaflets reproduced in the Museum collection 22 (15 percent) commemorate such events (see Table 2-3) and all of these commemorative leaflets were produced prior to 1941. Some of the propaganda materials refer to the First World War (the "Great War") and, in this material, that war is usually referred to as the "Imperial War", the war where the imperial powers used ordinary working folk to do the fighting. The Russian workers are celebrated because they took Russia out of the fighting and formed the Soviet Government.

⁷³ See Hy Van Luong, *Revolution in the Village*, pp. 27, 29, 99-100 for first-hand references by Hy Van Luong's informant to the production of propaganda materials for the Yên Bái uprising.

Table 2-3: *Leaflets Commemorating Particular Events*

Commemoration Event	Number of leaflets
International Labour Day, 1st May	4
Russian October Revolution 1917	8
International Women's Day 8th March	2
Start of the First World War 1st August	3
Paris Commune of 1871, 18th March ⁷⁴	2
Rural Nghệ-Tĩnh Soviets in Vietnam 1930-1931	3

The focus on specific events and on international matters in the agitation materials diminished as time went by and, as the Second World War affected Indochina more and more, the leaflets became concerned with the situation in Indochina. Of the leaflets produced between 1941 and 1945, only nine percent of them were concerned exclusively with international events (see Table 2-4), whereas nearly forty percent of the leaflets produced prior to this had an international focus.

Table 2-4: *Leaflets concerned with Indochina only*

Period	Number of Leaflets	Number concerned solely with Indochina	Proportion concerned solely with Indochina
1924-1935	68	44	65%
1936-1940	11	5	45%
1941-1945	67	61	91%
Total	146	110	75%

⁷⁴ The Paris Commune was a local government formed in Paris at the end of the Franco-Prussian war. It lasted from 18 March 1871 to 28 May 1871. "The working class became politically isolated and the socialist movement [in Europe] virtually outlawed" as a result of the Commune, but the Commune has been celebrated since by socialists and its failure seen as a cogent reason for propaganda among the people. See Robert Gildea, *Barricades and Borders: Europe 1800-1914*, 3rd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp 223-225, the quote from p. 225.

Content of the *Tuyên truyền*

Examples that follow are drawn from the material described above and include material purportedly prepared by the Communist Party (or the nascent entities that were to become the Vietnamese Communist Party), material directed to students, some from the early 1930s that may have been used in the Nghệ-Tĩnh uprisings, *tuyên truyền* from the 1936 period and some that shows an international influence.

The role of mobilisation material, particularly during the 1930s troubles, is problematic. There was a great deal of general resentment towards the taxation effects of colonialism and, if accounts of French tax collection practices, such as that described in Chapter 18 of Nguyễn Công Hoan's *Dead End*,⁷⁵ are true and were commonplace, then the French would appear to have provided motivation aplenty to incite violent protests, and further mobilisation would have required well-directed publication of agitation materials and, above all, organisation. In Nguyễn Công Hoan's *Dead End* methods of tax collection that are described sometimes involved tying peasants up and beating them until friends and relations come up with the money – sometimes by borrowing at usurious rates (5 percent per day, for example)⁷⁶ or by selling food or seed stock and thus forcing peasants to borrow for the next season's planting. In the final scene of Hoan's story, officials steal goods from throughout the village and the village administrator is told to "straighten this out among the villagers themselves". Finally, to the relief of the inhabitants, the corrupt officials leave the village with their own pockets full and the peasants in misery.

I have not been able to identify pamphlets or other mobilisation material that can reliably be said to have been used directly in the Nghệ-Tĩnh soviets or the associated demonstrations, although there are first-hand accounts of the Yên Bái uprising.⁷⁷ However there is some material from Nghệ-Tĩnh that may well have played a part in the mobilisation of the peasants and this is discussed below.

⁷⁵ See Nguyễn Công Hoan, *Dead End*, pp. 188-204.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p.191.

⁷⁷ Some of Hy Van Luong's account of the uprising is based on a first-hand account. See Hy Van Luong, *Revolution in the Village*, pp. ix to xi.

The demonstrations in Nghệ-Tĩnh did not come “out of the blue”. Before the 1930s there was already an infrastructure in place, with mutual aid societies and powerful peasant associations which set wages for ploughing and rice-planting which were very effective against landowners who wished to gouge their workers.⁷⁸ Leaflets, clandestine newspapers and “communist tracts” were reported in the Nghệ-Tĩnh area during the 1920s and throughout 1930. Before the main 1st May demonstrations, French security forces had found leaflets and, in a district in Hà Tĩnh, discovered “two mimeograph machines and numerous printed materials”.⁷⁹ The demonstrators of 1st May, who would eventually set up the Nghệ-Tĩnh soviets, marched under the communist hammer-and-sickle flag and carried slogans but there is considerable doubt that they were connected in any way to the international communist movement – in fact, Duiker notes that “a few peasants thought that the hammer and sickle was the government’s flag”.⁸⁰ The slogans were similar to those discussed below and called for:⁸¹

- pay rises;
- reduction of working hours;
- reduction of taxes;
- opposition to terror (see the description above of tax collection methods);
- compensation to the families of those killed at Yên Bái.

Later, in June, another slogan was added:

- Abolish all taxes and compensate the families of the victims of May 1!

By August, the demonstrators were demanding:

- Down with French Imperialism!
- Support the Soviet Union and the Chinese Revolution!
- Solidarity with the colonized peoples!
- Down with arbitrary arrests!
- Compensation to the families of victims of repression!⁸²

⁷⁸ Ngo Vinh Long, *The Indochinese Communist Party and Peasant Rebellion* 1978, p. 17.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 19.

⁸⁰ Duiker, *The Rise of Nationalism in Vietnam*, p 221.

⁸¹ Ngo Vinh Long, *The Indochinese Communist Party and Peasant Rebellion* 1978, p. 18.

⁸² Ngo Vinh Long, *The Indochinese Communist Party and Peasant Rebellion* 1978, p. 20.

It is shown in later analysis that the international connection (support for the Soviet Union) is not unusual in mobilisation material of the time and we can see that some of the demonstrators in Vietnam saw themselves as part of larger world-wide movements. This connection was to remain and to be encouraged by Hồ Chí Minh, in particular.

The Party, and its predecessors, encouraged people to join unions and associations that could work to help their plight through many recruitment drives, sometimes supported by printed and hand-written propaganda material. Much of this printed material for mobilisation of the population was typically used in the cities, small towns and industrial areas where the Communist Party was most active but, in Nghệ-Tĩnh, placards and slogans were used by the protesters before the soviets were formed.⁸³ An example of one of the posters typically used in 1931 is shown in Illustration 2-1.⁸⁴ The illustration here shows three posters or leaflets (the three are printed on the one sheet, approximately A4 size) which urge readers to join one of the many underground labour unions organised by the Party and to demand pay rises, controlled working hours and so forth. The first block of text reads:

*Anh em chị em áo xanh, áo nâu, khách, đàn-bà, trẻ con, tổ chức nhau vào
Công-hội!
Theo Đảng Cộng sản Đông-dương, là đảng của anh em chị em, dẫn đường,
đòi cho được:
Tăng tiền lương lên:
Thợ áo xanh, thợ khách ít nhất là hai đồng một ngày
Thợ áo nâu, ít nhất là một đồng một ngày
Thợ đàn bà ít nhất là 1 đồng – Thợ trẻ con ít nhất là năm hào
Đảng Cộng Sản Đông dương*

⁸³ See Ngo Vinh Long, *The Indochinese Communist Party and Peasant Rebellion*, pp. 18,20.

⁸⁴ Throughout this Chapter, the captions for the illustrations list the source as: (a) the number in my own photographic collection, if it exists there; (b) the catalogue number from the Museum of the Revolution, and, if any; (c) the page number in Phạm Mai Hùng *et al* (Compilers). *Thuyền Đón Cách Mạng Trước Tháng 9 Năm 1945*.

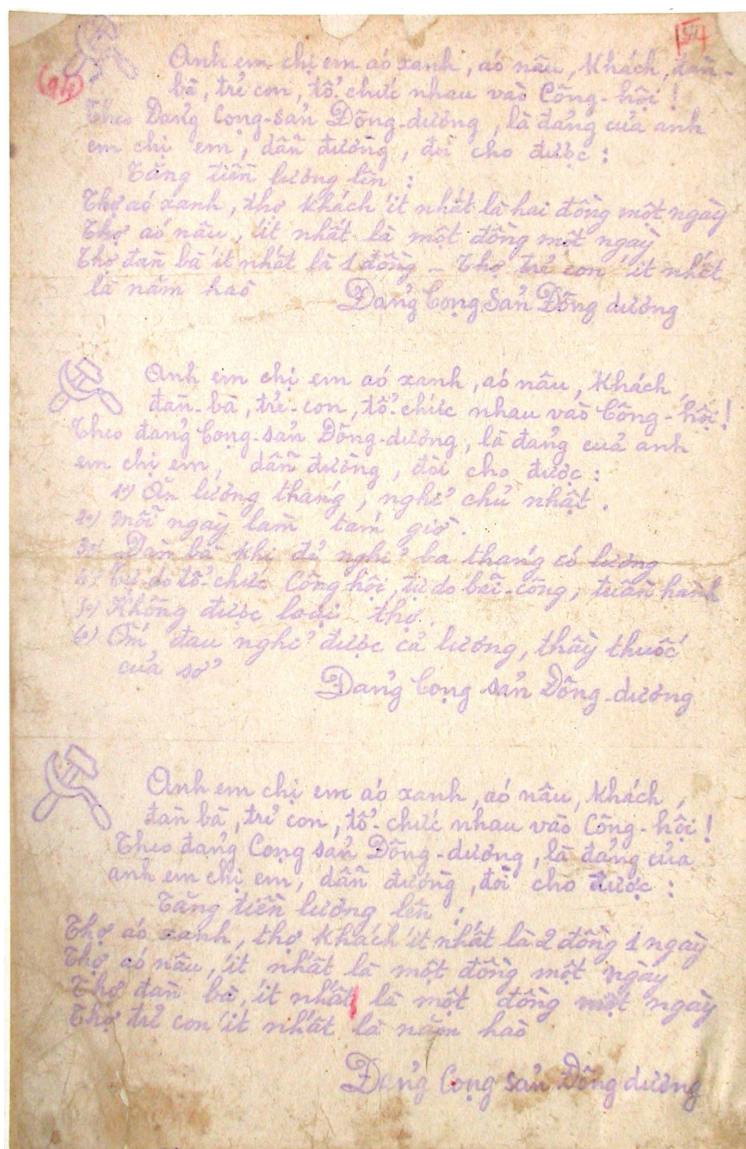


Illustration 2-1: Communist Party labour posters from 1931.
 (DSCN0432, BTCM 1925/Gy620, Truyền Đơn, pp 83,84).

translated as:

Brothers, sisters, blue collars,⁸⁵ brown collars,⁸⁶ Chinese⁸⁷ workers, women, young people, prepare to join the Union!
 Follow the Indochina Communist Party, the party of brothers and sisters, guiding the way for:
 An increase in wages:
 Blue collar workers and guest workers, at least two đồng per day
 Brown collar workers, at least one đồng per day

⁸⁵ The actual text is “blue shirts”, but “blue collar” is a better translation of the sense here. Blue shirts were often supplied by managers for workers.

⁸⁶ Farmers or farm labourers.

⁸⁷ The Vietnamese is *khách* or “guest”. Guest workers in Vietnam were usually from China and were often there informally.

Women workers at least 1 *đồng* – child workers at least fifty cents
Indochina Communist Party

This particular poster has two blocks of text like this (the top and bottom ones) and the middle block adds another six demands that the Union will work for:

- 1) *Ăn lương tháng, nghỉ chủ nhật.*
- 2) *Mỗi ngày làm tám giờ*
- 3) *Đàn bà khi đẻ nghỉ ba tháng có lương*
- 4) *Tự do tổ chức công hội, tự do bãi công, tuần hành*
- 5) *Không được loại thợ*
- 6) *Ốm đau nghỉ được cả lương, thầy thuốc của sở*

The translation is:

- 1) Pay every month, Sunday as a holiday
- 2) Eight-hour work day
- 3) New mothers receive 3 months off on full pay
- 4) Freedom to join a union, freedom to strike, and to protest
- 5) Not required to do arbitrary kinds of work
- 6) Sick leave when ill, medical staff in the workplace

The demands of these slogans are placed firmly in the list of concerns of the international labour movements, where the international Communist Parties were recruiting, and there is little acknowledgement of matters that were specific to Vietnam, such as those troubling Vietnamese plantation workers, farm labourers and others hurt by the colonial experience. The demands are appropriate for an industrial situation, where labour is organised in an employer-employee relationship the workers being controlled by an employer in the interests of that employer, but have less relevance for farmers or farm labourers in the rural areas of Vietnam.

A typical leaflet directed to farmers (*Hỡi anh em chị em dân cày!* – “Calling brother and sister farmers!”) in Nghệ An in August 1930 urges the farm labourers and peasants to support the strikes and demonstrations at the match factory at Bến Thủy is reproduced in the Archives collection.⁸⁸ After describing the demonstration in Bến Thủy, in which nearly 1000 workers took place, and listing their demands, in which is included a demand not to hand workers over for service in the colonial army, the leaflet urges farmers to join with the factory workers. Farmers are urged to:

⁸⁸ See Dương Văn Khảm *et al*, *Tuyên Truyền Cách mạng Trước Năm 1945*, pp. 102-103.

- 1) *Bênh-vực công-nhân Bến-Thủy.*
- 2) *Bỏ thuế hoa-lợi, thuế chợ, thuế muối và công sưu.*
- 3) *Cấp cơm gạo cho dân bị đói.*
- 4) *Lấy ruộng-đất của đại-địa-chủ cho dân nghèo.*
- 5) *Đánh-đổ chính-sách khủng-bố!*

translated as:

- 1) Support Bến Thủy workers,
- 2) Don't pay taxes on produce, market taxes, salt taxes and refuse corvée labour
- 3) Rice for people who are hungry.
- 4) Seize land belonging to large landlords and give it to the poor.
- 5) Overthrow repressive and cruel policies!

The leaflet is signed *Đảng Cộng Sản Việt Nam* (Vietnamese Communist Party) but, as explained above, there is uncertainty about what elements of the Party would have been responsible for its production and the content may not have been decided centrally. It took the Communist Party some (little) time to find motivational materials that were more closely relevant to an illiterate peasantry and, as discussed in following chapters, it was Hồ Chí Minh himself who was able to make this connection very effectively. This particular leaflet is representative of a number of similar ones in the Archives collection that all come from the Nghệ-Tĩnh area during the troubles of the early 1930s and is, as is shown in the next chapter, quite different to *tuyên truyền* prepared at a later period for the *Việt bắc* area.

Students were also targeted in the recruitment drives of the posters and leaflets from the Party. Students had long been a part of the anti-colonial struggle (Hồ Chí Minh himself had been expelled from school in Huế in 1908 for acting as an interpreter for peasants taking part in anti-colonial activity).⁸⁹ An example of a recruitment poster is shown in Illustration 2-2. This example has been either hand-written (if so, then using the purple ink employed extensively in Vietnamese schools) or produced on a spirit duplicator.⁹⁰ The text reads as follows:

⁸⁹ See Duiker, *Hồ Chí Minh*, pp. 32-37 for an account of Nguyễn Tất Thành (Hồ Chí Minh) at the Quốc Học school in Huế. He was removed from the school by the French police on 10 May 1908.

⁹⁰ I used to think that all of these purple posters were made using a spirit duplicator, but the evidence from the style of this particular poster is a little against that idea. Note the “copperplate” style of writing, which is difficult to achieve using a spirit duplicator. Purple ink is commonly used in schools, even today.

Khẩu hỏ [illegible] học [illegible – possibly *sinh*]⁹¹

1. Tự do xem [illegible – probably *sách*] báo
2. Tự do lập hội
3. Tự do bãi khóa.
4. Tự do du học nước ngoài.
5. Phản đối đánh đập chửi mắng học trò.
6. Phản đối vô cớ đuổi học trò.
7. Phản đối bắt học trò phải có người bảo đảm
8. Phản đối can thiệp hành động của học trò khi ở ngoài trường

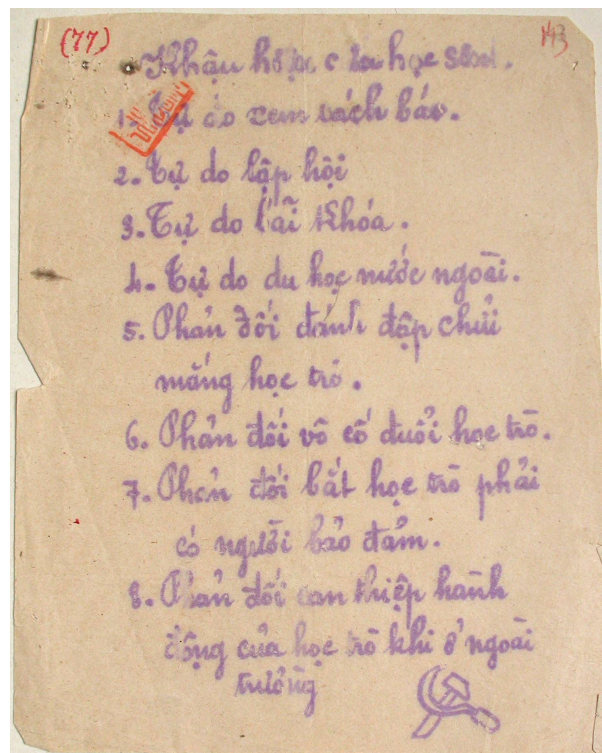


Illustration 2-2: Communist Party poster directed at school students, from 1930-1931. (DSCN0431, BTM 1876/Gy577, Truyền Đơn p 48)

which is translated as follows:

Student slogans

1. Freedom to read books and newspapers
2. Freedom to form associations
3. Freedom to go on strike
4. Freedom to study abroad
5. Oppose beating and abusing students
6. Oppose the expulsion of students without reasonable cause

⁹¹ The first line of text is not clear as the writing is smudged and I suspect that there are spelling errors – possibly this was written by a student not yet fully fluent in the Vietnamese *quốc ngữ* writing system. I suspect that the line should read *Khẩu hiệu của học sinh* (“slogans for school children” or “student slogans”).

7. Oppose forcing students to have a guarantor
8. Oppose interfering with the actions of students when they are outside school

These slogans were written out over the Communist Party symbol and give us some insight into the educational situation in 1931 and show the issues the Party was trying to use to mobilise student action. The freedoms to read, to associate and to study abroad are also included in the slogans used by Nguyễn Ái Quốc (Hồ Chí Minh) in his writings between 1921 and 1926 and were not new demands from the anti-colonial forces.⁹²

As discussed above, most of the leaflets from this period look to the international Communist movement or to anti-colonial sentiment for their message, and do not use the folk and common traditions to carry the message – this was to be a striking feature of mobilisation materials produced later under Hồ Chí Minh's influence and is discussed in the following chapter. Some of these early posters refer to events quite outside the experience of ordinary people. For example, the poster shown in Illustration 2-3 (approximately A4 size) urges people to remember the 21st of January 1935, as a day to celebrate the life and work of Lenin⁹³ and to remember the international Communist movement:

Anh em chị em công nông!
Ngày 21 là ngày kỷ niệm đồng chí Lénine [Lênin]. Đồng chí là người thực
hành chủ nghĩa Marx [Mác] đem đường chỉ lối cho Công Nông Nga làm giai
cấp cách mạng đã thắng lợi trên 1/6 quả đất đã 17 năm nay.
...
Đàn ông đàn bà toàn tự do bình đẳng.
Đồng chí Lénine [Lênin] Muôn năm.
Cách mạng Cộng sản Đông Dương muôn năm.
Ngày 21-1-1935
Đảng Cộng [Cộng] sản Đông Dương

⁹² Hồ Chí Minh (1921-1926). "The Anti-French Resistance", translated by the publisher, in *Hồ Chí Minh: Selected Writings (1920-1969)*, pp. 22-23. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1973.

⁹³ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (22 April 1870 to 21 January 1924) was leader of the Bolshevik Party in Russia from 17 November 1903 until his death. He directed the overthrow of the Provisional Russian Government on 6-7 November 1917 in the Russian October Revolution, and was Head of the Soviet State from 8 November 1917 until his death in 1924. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Lenin (accessed 8 September 2009).

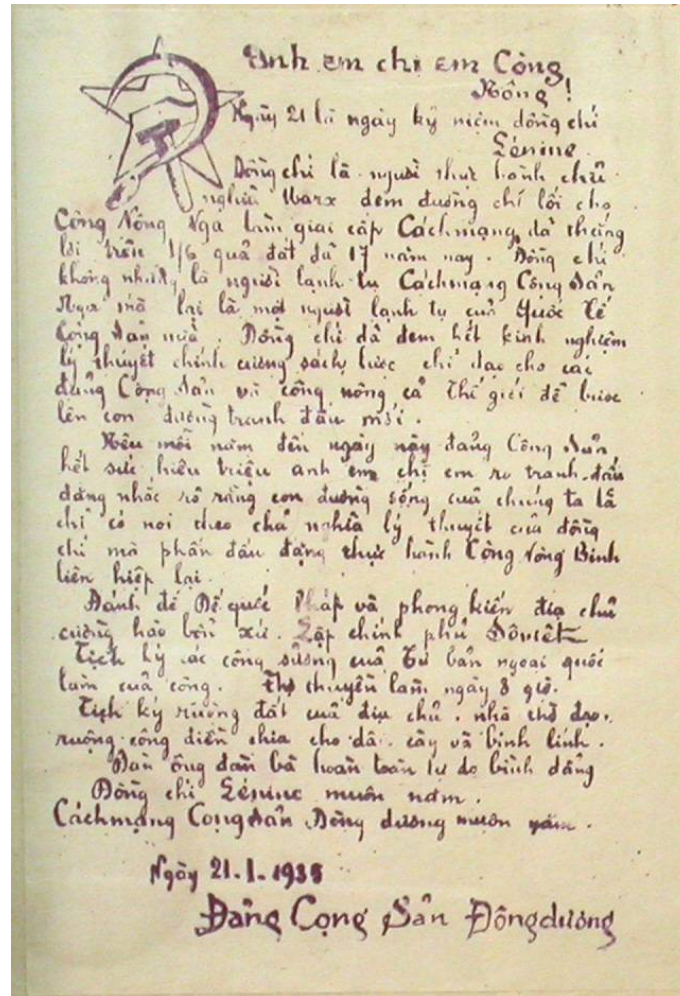


Illustration 2-3: Celebrate Lenin's commemoration day.
(DSCN256a, Truyền Đơn p 140).

which can be translated:

Brother and sister workers and farmers!
The 21st is the day to commemorate comrade Lenin. A comrade who brought Marxism to reality, carrying it along the path for the workers and peasants of Russia make the revolutionary class achieve victory for one sixth of the earth, now already for 17 years.

...

All men and women, free and equal.
Comrade Lenin for ever.
Indochinese Communist revolution for ever.

21 January 1935
Communist Party of Indochina

Lenin was not, of course, unknown to intellectuals in Vietnam, people such as the leaders of the nationalist and socialist movements. In fact, in 1925 Nguyễn Ái Quốc (Hồ Chí Minh) wrote an article for the Soviet review *Krasnui* wherein he outlines his view that Lenin has succeeded in “drawing the colonial peoples into the revolutionary movement”.⁹⁴

Tuyên truyền from the Popular Front period is represented in the Archive’s collection mentioned above by about thirty-three transcripts of leaflets or pamphlets,⁹⁵ facsimiles of material from this period are not published. The leaflets available for analysis from the period show some common threads. Most of the leaflets are from Sài Gòn (now Hồ Chí Minh City) and the names of the authors and address of the printery responsible for the leaflet is printed on the leaflet in many cases. The printing of the name and address of the organisations responsible for the *tuyên truyền* indicates that censorship was relaxed during the Popular Front period but control was not and the French security force (the Sûreté) wished to keep activists under some form of surveillance. The fact that most of this material comes from the two centres of power also seems to indicate desire for a tight control over the material by the authorities. For example, the leaflet discussed below was delivered to the security agency and there is reason to suppose that a copy of every leaflet and pamphlet had to be so submitted.

Many of the leaflets are directed to particular groups of workers, such as rickshaw pullers, hairdressers, kitchen hands, carpenters and sometimes the location is very specific, being a particular factory or district as shown in the example discussed below. There are very few general calls for action or direct criticism of the institution of colonialism or of the Colonial Government, presumably because an element of censorship and control was still in place. Although facsimiles are not available to verify the point, all of them seem to have been text-based only – that is, no pictorial symbols or the like have been used. Some of the leaflets are printed on coloured paper which is seen, by the editors of the Archive’s collection, as symbolic – for example, “green” seems to represent “peace” to them. They write about this leaflet:

⁹⁴ Hồ Chí Minh (1925). “Lenin and the Colonial Peoples”, translated by the publisher, in *Hồ Chí Minh: Selected Writings (1920-1969)*, pp. 37-38. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1973.

⁹⁵ I would prefer to call single-sheet material “leaflets” and multi-page *tuyên truyền* “pamphlets”, but there is not enough information in the Archive’s collection to make this distinction reliably in each case.

...in thành 5.000 tờ trên giấy thường màu xanh hoà bình,...

...print completed 5,000 copies on ordinary paper coloured peace green...⁹⁶

going on to describe the leaflet dimensions (16cm by 24.5cm) and to specify the address of the printery.

The example was produced on 17 September 1936 in Bình Tây (now in Quận 6 of Hồ Chí Minh City) for workers in the alcohol factory and is fairly typical of the pamphlets produced during the Popular Front period.⁹⁷ This leaflet (as with others in the collection) was produced as a contribution to a meeting of the Indochina General Assembly (date of meeting not stated) and 5,000 copies were produced. The leaflet opens by making a connection between workers in the alcohol factory and other workers “everywhere”:

*Hiện thời thợ thuyền khắp nơi đều đứng lên liên hiệp.
Họ lo thảo bản tình cầu: TĂNG LƯƠNG, BỚT GIỜ LÀM VIỆC, ĐÒI CHỦ
PHẢI ĐỐI ĐÁI TỬ TẾ và phải CÓ LUẬT PHÁP BAN HÀNH ĐỂ BẢO HỘ
CÔNG NHƠN.*

which is translated as:

These days workers everywhere are standing up and banding together.
They are concerned and have drafted proposals: INCREASE SALARIES,
DECREASE WORKING HOURS, CALL ON EMPLOYERS TO TREAT
WORKERS DECENTLY, and must FOLLOW THE LAWS IN ORDER
TO PROTECT WORKERS.

After complaining about broken promises from employers, the leaflet goes on to point out how ordinary people in France have different opportunities:

*Bình dân Pháp lên cầm quyền xứ Pháp. Bình dân Pháp có địa vị, lãnh trách
nhiệm [trách nhiệm] chỉ huy một nước, cầm lều, lái một xứ như xứ Pháp
chẳng phải xưa nay họ ngồi khoanh tay như chúng ta mà họ được vậy.
Họ tranh đấu, họ biết đoàn kết.
Còn chúng ta thì sao?*

translated as:

Ordinary French people have risen up and hold power in the French region.
Ordinary French people have status, receive responsibility, can be in charge
of a country, take the reins and control an area like France, they have not
taken this power by sitting with their arms crossed like we have been doing.
They fight, they know how to be united.
What about us?

⁹⁶ Dương Văn Khâm et al, *Tuyên truyền cách mạng trước năm 1945*, p. 217.

⁹⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 217-220 for a transcription.

But after these stirring and revolutionary thoughts, the leaflet goes on to make demands which are more practical and similar to that which workers in France received during the Popular Front period:⁹⁸

- 1.- *Một năm 15 ngày nghỉ được ăn lương.*
- 2.- *Đau nằm nhà thương chủ trả tiền.*
- 3.- *Bị tai nạn có tiền cứu giúp, thiệt mạng vợ con được nuôi nấng.*
- 4.- *Không được đuổi ngang, đuổi phải chịu tiền thiệt hại; ăn tiền ngày thì 15 ngày tiền công, ăn tiền tháng thì một tháng.*

translated as:

- 1.- 15 days paid holiday each year.
- 2.- Sick leave to be paid.
- 3.- In case of accidents, money to be paid for help, in case of death the wife and children to be supported.
- 4.- Not to be dismissed unreasonably, if dismissed credit must be given for the loss; if wages are paid daily then 15 day's pay, if wages are paid monthly then one month's pay.

The pamphlet also calls for strikes to be legitimised, for labour laws to be enacted and for freedoms of assembly and to produce and distribute written material. The pamphlet finishes with a call to support the coming general assembly.

Most of the leaflets from the Popular Front period are similar to this one. Even those that are directed to the countryside are addressed to farm workers (the *lao nông*) and not to peasants (*dân cấy* or *dân cày*) as were some of the earlier pamphlets. There is no reference to any means of working towards independence and regular calls to the peasantry to foment revolution did not appear again until the 1940s, and subsequent chapters cover that critical development.

The *tuyên truyền* of the 1930s is characterised by a range of uncertain targets and shifting demands. Some of the claims arise from the needs and demands of European and Russian urban workers, copied into the Vietnamese context. Some try to engage the rural workers of Vietnam but do not hit the mark in the way in which the poetry of Phạm Tất Đắc (discussed above) and the later *tuyên truyền* of Hồ Chí Minh were able to achieve. Eight-hour days and paid holidays were irrelevant to the peasantry, except for those occasions when they were working to raise cash to pay taxes. *Tuyên truyền* which was able

⁹⁸ Agulhon, *The French Republic 1879-1992*, pp. 228-229.

to touch the hearts of the peasantry, who comprised around ninety percent of the Vietnamese population, would have to wait for another decade. Land reform, the ability to be able to make their own decisions and freedom from unfair taxes were some of the issues of importance which would engage the rural folk.

The 1940s

In 1941 Nguyễn Ái Quốc (Hồ Chí Minh) wrote a *Letter From Abroad*,⁹⁹ which signalled a marked change in the policies of the Indochinese Communist Party. In the *Letter*, he extolled the patriotic activities of the ancestors of the Vietnamese people including Phan Đình Phùng (1847-1896), Hoàng Hoa Thám (1860-1913), Lương Ngọc Quyến and the Trần kings, recalling the 13th Century defeat of the Mongolian armies. In his list of “glorious feats” he also included the insurgencies in Thái Nguyên, Yên Bái, Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh, some of which are discussed above. The message of the *Letter* was that the Vietnamese people must work together to “overthrow the Japanese and the French”. No class struggles are mentioned, but “Notables, soldiers, workers, peasants, traders, civil servants, youth and women who warmly love your country” are called upon. Unlike earlier appeals, such as his *Appeal Made on the Occasion of the Founding of the ICP*,¹⁰⁰ there are no socialist or workers’ slogans, but an appeal to patriotism, an appeal “to fellow-countrymen”. The *Appeal* of Hồ Chí Minh’s marks an important turn towards an emphasis on nationalism, and a reduced importance given to social revolution, a change for which Hồ Chí Minh had earlier received some criticism from within the international Communist movement.¹⁰¹

The change towards urging independence for a new nation of Vietnam and the move away from the call for a social and an economic revolution had an effect on the propaganda of the independence parties. The following chapter will demonstrate that an entirely different approach to propaganda used for mobilising a largely illiterate peasantry

⁹⁹ Hồ Chí Minh (1941). “Letter From Abroad”, translated by the publisher, in *Hồ Chí Minh: Selected Writings (1920-1969)*, pp. 44-46. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1973.

¹⁰⁰ Hồ Chí Minh (1930). “Appeal Made on the Occasion of the Founding of the Indochinese Communist Party”, translated by the publisher, in *Hồ Chí Minh: Selected Writings (1920-1969)*, pp. 39-41. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1973.

¹⁰¹ The matter of Nguyễn Ái Quốc (Hồ Chí Minh) and his relations with the international Communist movement is not the subject of this thesis and the matter is quite complicated. See Pierre Brocheux. *Ho Chi Minh: A Biography*, translated by Claire Duiker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 63-65 for criticism of Nguyễn Ái Quốc’s nationalism in 1934 and pp. 74-75 for a ...continued on page 60

was widely deployed from the early 1940s onward, particularly in the northern rural areas of Vietnam. The new propaganda techniques connected much more readily and generally with the rural community and used the folk traditions, song and picture, current among the people of the area.

A Note on Some Aspects of French Propaganda

There appears to have been very little general French anti-independence propaganda and most of it took the form of newspapers, published in French in the larger cities. This does not imply that there was no anti-independence activity for, as indicated above, the colonial authorities censored much written material and the Sûreté was very active in investigating anti-colonial activity. In fact, French armed forces and Sûreté activity in April and May 1931 caused the complete destruction of all Communist Party structure above the provincial level.¹⁰² However, there is only sporadic evidence of the effectiveness of French propaganda. For example, Trần Huy Liệu, writing in 1960, is quoted by Sophie Quinn-Judge as looking back at 1931 and writing that there “were grave errors which discredited the whole [Communist] movement and gave an opening to enemy [French] propaganda”.¹⁰³

Much French propaganda took the form of demonstrating the superiority of French “civilisation” over Vietnamese native society. An interesting example is shown by the money and engineering skill that went into the development of railways in both Vietnam and in the southern parts of China.¹⁰⁴ Natalia Starostina quotes Paul Doumer, former Governor-General of Indochina, writing in 1905 about the Doumer Bridge (now the Long Biên bridge) over the Red River in Hanoi:

discussion of the way in which his views became more accepted in the context of anti-colonialism as a result of the resolutions of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935.

¹⁰² See Quinn-Judge, *Ho Chi Minh*, p. 187.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 190.

¹⁰⁴ See Natalia Starostina. “Engineering the Empire of Images: Constructing Railways in Asia before the Great War” *Southeast Review of Asian Studies*, vol. 31 (2009): 181-206.

Indigenous and scientific techniques which were utilized and the result which was obtained made them [the indigenous people] aware of the beneficial force of French civilization. Our scientific genius, our industrial power morally conquered the population, whose armies we have subdued.¹⁰⁵

French propaganda extolling the superiority of French science and engineering was directed as much to the French people back home as it was to “morally conquering” the local population. Railway bridges, in particular, were used to build the image of French civilisation to the local Vietnamese population and also to demonstrate to the people of France the superiority of their own civilisation. Novels, postcards and art books were sold for this purpose.¹⁰⁶

The reality of the railways was somewhat different to this image of French superiority. Discussing about the railway from Hanoi to Yunnan in China, Natalia Starostina points out that “there was a drastic gap between the grandeur of the French ‘civilizing mission’ as it was presented in the imagery of railways” and the reality of construction, which often involved harsh labour conditions and forced labour.¹⁰⁷ There appears to have been little of the “moral victory” that Doumer had postulated among the peasant workers, as they had to be coerced into working for the railway. The railways were also little used and even the Doumer bridge carried only light traffic and was of no use to the majority of the people, the wealthiest of whom went by rickshaw or car, as it was purely a railway bridge. Trains throughout Indochina were also subject to attacks by “pirates” (independence militias) and so had to be constantly guarded by soldiers.¹⁰⁸

The railways, once thought by the French colonists to be suitable symbols of Empire and symbols of the might and generosity of France were apparently less powerful at arousing the loyalty of large sections of the Vietnamese population than the simple placards and posters which were used in the later insurrections in Nghệ-Tĩnh and other parts of Vietnam.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 186.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 192-195.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 197.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 199.

In French thinking, another important symbol for the Vietnamese people was the (French-approved) emperor (*hoàng đế* – a Chinese term). Bảo Đại (Vĩnh Thụy) was the son of Khải Định, an emperor committed to Franco-Vietnamese collaboration, and was sent to France for his education in 1921 at age of about 9 years.¹⁰⁹ Khải Định died in 1925 while Bảo Đại was still in France and he was to be left there, being educated and attuned to European ways in a privileged environment, so as to “take full advantage of the opportunities for personal growth”.¹¹⁰ The return was to be the subject of a great publicity campaign, the Minister of Colonies explaining to the Vietnamese Council of Ministers:

...your country, after His Majesty Bảo Đại's return, will experience one of the great moments of its history, for the homecoming of your Sovereign and the actions which your Government will then carry out will have a decisive effect on the orientation of the Protectorate's policy.¹¹¹

However he went on to explain that the French colonial authorities would still be in charge. Bảo Đại arrived in Đà Nẵng on 8 September 1932 to great ceremony amid a large public relations (that is, propaganda) exercise and set about trying to achieve some reforms in the governance of the colony. For all of the fanfare of the arrival of the Vietnamese Emperor changing the course of Vietnamese history, he proved to be ill-suited to the task of reform and complained of being side-lined by the French and of difficulties with the “traditionalists” at the Huế court.¹¹² The symbol of the returning Emperor was misplaced and failed to ignite few, other than those Vietnamese who were involved in Court intrigues and political dealings with the French colonisers. The masses of the people, the peasantry, were unimpressed with the concept of a *hoàng đế* (Confucian-style emperor) being foisted upon the country by a European power, particularly as the Confucian ethic was declining, particularly in the countryside, and was largely seen as a relic from the past century. Possibly an indigenous Vietnamese *vua* (king, moral authority

¹⁰⁹ See Bruce McFarland Lockhart. *The End of the Vietnamese Monarchy*. New Haven: Council on Southeast Asia Studies, Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1993, pp.31-32.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 59.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 61

¹¹² *ibid.*, pp. 91-93.

and protector) would have engendered more moral authority, although transfer of respect to the French colonial masters was probably an impossible task.¹¹³

Summary

There are two important aspects of Vietnamese propaganda which come out in this chapter. First the source material shows a move towards the use of symbolism – often with special meaning in the Vietnamese tradition – in addition to the text and slogan-based *tuyên truyền* used at the beginning of the 1930s decade, a change which gathered pace in later years and which is discussed in more detail in the following chapters. Second is the move towards a greater emphasis on Vietnamese nationalism and a lowering of the priority accorded to social revolution on the part of the Communist Party.

It is estimated that the literacy rate in Vietnam at the end of the 1930s was probably about ten percent overall and probably a great deal lower in the rural areas.¹¹⁴ Most of the material studied in this chapter, the leaflets, pamphlets and slogans, are very much text-based and thus would have been inaccessible directly to the majority of the peasant population and to many of the urban workers. In any case, much of the urban workforce comprised largely illiterate rural farm workers who had to raise cash to pay the taxes demanded by the Colonial Government and who had left their farms for this purpose.¹¹⁵ A few visual symbols, such as the hammer and sickle, were used to embellish the *tuyên truyền* material but, as described above, were not universally understood by the participants in the demonstrations and other activities. It was not until the 1940s that Vietnamese *tuyên truyền* was developed, with the active guidance and support of Hồ Chí Minh, that used techniques appropriate to an illiterate population, that is, use of folk poetry with its rhyme and rhythm and reference to folk heroes. It was the new propaganda of the 1940s that tapped into the idea of the “land of the ancestors”¹¹⁶ which was so much a part of rural Vietnam. This new development in the *tuyên truyền*, which had such a dramatic effect on

¹¹³ See *ibid.*, pp. 188-193 for a discussion of what may be expected of a Confucian *hoàng đế* and the implications of declining adherence to Confucian ideals in Vietnam.

¹¹⁴ See Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, pp. 33-34.

¹¹⁵ See Duy Lap Nguyen. “The Kiếm Thảo and the Uses of Disposable Time in the National Liberation Front.” *Public Culture*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2008): 375-394, p 380 for further discussion on this point.

¹¹⁶ See Benoît de Tréglodé. *Heroes and Revolution in Vietnam*, translated by Claire Duiker. Singapore: NUS Press in association with IRASEC, 2012, pp. 13-14.

the course of Vietnamese history, is discussed in the following chapters. Perhaps ironically, it was certain aspects of French propaganda, the demonstration of the grandeur of French engineering in roads, railways and telegraph (to name a few), which was hoped by the French authorities, to appeal to the illiterate masses of Indochina prior to 1941 but which were, in their final effect, less successful than the indigenous *tuyên truyền*.

Nationalism can be a very powerful ideal, often backed by powerful rhetoric. In the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) Soekarno was, like Hồ Chí Minh, working towards independence against a colonial regime and, in 1926, he wrote an explanation of its appeal which applies equally well to the Vietnamese situation:

Nationalism is the conviction, the consciousness of a people, that they are united in one group, one nation.
...it is certain that nationalist feeling creates a sense of self-confidence, and that this is something absolutely essential if we are to defend ourselves in the struggle to overcome conditions that would defeat us.
...it is this self-confidence which endows the revolutionary nationalists with the will to seek a Greater Indies or a Free Indonesia.¹¹⁷

It was this arousal of a “consciousness of a people” as a unity which was missing from much of the *tuyên truyền* of the 1930s but which began to appear in Hồ Chí Minh’s work, especially that of the 1940s, and which is explored in the next few chapters. The socialist activists working for independence in Vietnam in the 1930s looked to Europe, and particularly to Russia, for their examples and inspiration. Many of the slogans and the techniques they used were copied from Russian successes and were not adapted particularly to the task of persuading, or of engendering a sense of self-confidence, in the Vietnamese population. There was also some confusion evident in the aims – whether a social revolution was more important than a national revolution. An independent and self-confident nationalism was growing and, during the 1940s this, rather than a social revolution, was to prove the spark that roused the consciousness of the populace.

¹¹⁷ Soekarno (1926). “Nationalism, Islam and Marxism”, translated by Karel H. Warouw and Peter D. Weldon, in *Nationalism, Islam and Marxism*, pp. 35-62. Ithaca, New York: Modern Indonesian Project, Cornell University, 1970, p. 39.

Chapter 3

Breaking the Isolation – A Newspaper for the Rural *Việt bắc*

The previous chapter covered protest and propaganda during the 1930s in Vietnam and demonstrated some influence from international forces in the propaganda and mobilisation material. This chapter shows a new development which involves more subtle forms of engagement with the rural population of the *Việt bắc* using material that is uniquely Vietnamese. In the 1940s, the rural population began to take a greater role in protests and demonstrations, and became more aware of the colonial situation and more attracted to resistance. This chapter examines the effect that the surreptitious return of Hồ Chí Minh to Vietnam in 1941 had upon the persuasive ideas within propaganda materials. Hồ Chí Minh managed a number of publications, in particular a newspaper and a history of Vietnam, which were distributed in the rural north of the country and the ideas contained in these contributed quite considerably to the changes in attitude in those areas.

Propaganda and *Tuyên truyền* Under France and Japan

By mid-1940, France had been defeated in the Second World War and the northern two-thirds were occupied by the German Army, the southern part governed by the Vichy Government, headed by Phillipe Pétain.¹ In Vietnam the Japanese Army had occupied all of the country by mid 1941, but “permitted the forms of colonial rule to continue undisturbed until March 1945”.² Thus the Vietnamese people had two masters, French and Japanese, for the greater part of the Second World War and both used forms of propaganda to persuade the Vietnamese people, particularly to try to engage the youth of the country. The Japanese promoted the ideal of “Asia for the Asiatics” and opened schools to teach Japanese, pro-Japanese film were shown and radio broadcasts made to encourage Vietnamese to see themselves as part of the Japanese Greater Co-Prosperity Sphere.³ Vietnamese were told that the “Japanese and Vietnamese people ‘had the same literature and were of the same race’”.⁴

¹ See Eric Dorn Brose. *A History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 231.

² Alexander B. Woodside. *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976, p. 216.

³ See David G. Marr. *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, pp. 81-82.

⁴ Woodside, *Community and Revolution*, p. 216.

The initial French colonial response to the defeat of European France was increased effort into suppression of “rebel” forces and an increase in the power of the security forces (the *Sûreté générale*) in order to oppose any threat from the indigenous population.⁵ Later, Governor-General Jean Decoux instituted a propaganda campaign emphasising loyalty to Vichy France and its leader Marshall Pétain with the slogan “A single chief: Pétain. A single duty: to obey. A single motto: to serve”.⁶ Plans were announced to establish a new “federation council” and advisory councils, and to form offices for information and propaganda, sports and youth and a commission for price surveillance. A foot race was planned from Angkor to Hanoi, as well as a bicycle race from Hanoi to



Illustration 3-1: France and Vietnam stand together, DSCN0817.

Although dated 1940, this poster was found stapled inside a collection of the music magazine Khuyến Nhạc (Encourage Music), issue of 15 November 1946. This copy is extremely fragile and falls apart if handled.

⁵ Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, p. 72.

⁶ See Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, pp. 72-73.

Phnom Penh. International Workers' Day on 1st May was to be renamed and celebrated as the Marshall's *Ngày lễ Bồn-mạng*⁷ ("Festival of Life Day").⁸

The Decoux Government also produced poster propaganda of its own, particularly in attempts to influence urban youth. An example dated 1940 is shown at Illustration 3-1.⁹

The text reads:

Hỡi người Pháp và người Nam, không lúc nào bằng lúc này phải nên cùng nhau sát cánh – Pháp Việt đồng tâm là điều cốt tử cho cuộc tương lai của Đông-Pháp.

that is:

French and Annamese people, now more than at any other time, it is necessary for us to stand together – French and Vietnamese as one, is the vital point for the future of Oriental France [the Colony].

Other posters are reported to have been placed on locations such as the Catholic cathedral in Saigon.¹⁰ This propaganda activity, as well as the work of the General Commissariat for Physical Education, Sports, and Youth, and the cycling and foot races produced great interest among young people, particularly in the larger cities.¹¹ Youth organisations were also formed but Woodside points out that few of these were successful in having much influence in the countryside.¹²

Propaganda materials from French colonial sources generally show no recognition of Vietnamese aspirations for independence, and display little understanding neither of Vietnamese society and culture, nor of the feelings many Vietnamese had (and have) for their country and its rich history. However, under the pressure of competing with the Japanese for the allegiance of Vietnamese youth, schools were finally allowed to celebrate national Vietnamese heroes, such as the Trưng sisters and Lê Lợi.¹³

⁷ The modern orthography is *Ngày lễ Bản mệnh*.

⁸ See *Ngày 1^{er} Mai*. Saigon: C. Ardin, 1942, pp. 2-8. This publication is available in the Special Collections section of the National Library of Vietnam.

⁹ The provenance of this poster is unknown. It was found in the Science Library in Hồ Chí Minh City.

¹⁰ Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, p. 73.

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp. 76-78.

¹² Woodside, *Community and Revolution*, p. 216.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 217. The Trưng sisters, Trưng Trắc and Trưng Nhị, ruled the northern part of Vietnam briefly from 40 CE to 43 CE, Trưng Trắc as Empress Trưng Nữ Vương. They are considered, in Vietnam, as early national heroes repelling Chinese rule. See Hà Văn Thụ and Trần Hồng Đức. *A Brief Chronology of Vietnam's History*. Hanoi: NXB Thế Giới, 2000, pp. 15-16. Lê Lợi was, likewise, seen as a hero opposing Chinese rule (the Ming dynasty in that case). He expelled the Chinese and ruled ...continued on page 68

Thus, from about 1941 onwards there were three propaganda agendas operating within Vietnam. Largely confined to the cities, Japanese and French propaganda vied for attention and loyalty, particularly from the young people, while in the countryside, the *Việt Minh* were sowing the seeds of revolt in the fertile fields of the peasantry of the *Việt bắc*. The rest of this chapter examines the work of this *Việt Minh tuyên truyền*.

Hồ Chí Minh Returns Home

On 28 January 1941, Hồ Chí Minh (as Nguyễn Ái Quốc)¹⁴ returned to Vietnam, after nearly 30 years absence from the country.¹⁵ From 28 January until 7 February he stayed in the house of Mr Lý Quốc Súng¹⁶ at Pắc Bó in the north of Cao Bằng province and then moved to a cave a few hundred metres from the house.¹⁷ He had arrived from China, where he had been living in order to avoid capture by the French colonial authorities while he was working for the USSR-based Comintern (Communist International). Hồ Chí Minh probably chose the Cao Bằng area for his initial base in Vietnam because it was close to the border with China, but also because it was inhabited by people who had to be mobilised if a fight for independence was to be successful, that is peasants who were already troubled by the effects of French colonialism. It is reported that Hồ Chí Minh had met, and been impressed by, some ethnic minority people who were members of the Communist Party from Cao Bằng in 1935 – they were Hoàng Văn Nộn and Hoàng Đình

from 1428 to 1433. See Hà Văn Thư and Trần Hồng Đức, *A Brief Chronology of Vietnamese History*, pp. 95-97.

¹⁴ Nguyễn Ái Quốc's adult name was Nguyễn Tất Thành (changed from his birth name of Nguyễn Sinh Cung, probably in the year 1901) but he used many other aliases during his lifetime. Throughout this chapter I shall use the most widely-known of his aliases, that of Hồ Chí Minh, even though he did not adopt that name generally until about 1945. See William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2000, pp. 22-23. He was apparently using the name "Hồ Chí Minh" at least as early as November 1943 – see Archimedes L. A. Patti, *Why Viet Nam? Prelude to America's Albatross*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1980, p. 46.

¹⁵ Hồ Chí Minh left Saigon on the French vessel the *Amiral Latouche-Tréville* on 5 June 1911. See Duiker *Ho Chi Minh*, p. 44.

¹⁶ This is possibly a Chinese name.

¹⁷ See Pierre Brocheux, *Ho Chi Minh: A Biography*, translated by Claire Duiker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 69. There is some minor dispute about these dates but I am accepting the dates and the account of the living arrangements (the house and then the cave) as given on the plaques installed by the Vietnamese Government at the point where Hồ Chí Minh entered Vietnam. See also Duiker *Ho Chi Minh*, pp. 248-251. Sophie Quinn-Judge writes that "Ho Chi Minh is said to have returned to Vietnam in February 1941, but he may actually have spent most of his time in the villages on the Chinese side of the border". See Sophie Quinn-Judge, *Ho Chi Minh: the Missing Years 1919-1941*. London: Hurst & Company, 2003, p. 248.

Giong – and this fact, coupled by the favourable geography of the area, probably also influenced his decision.¹⁸ Prior to 1941, the colonial government had tightened control over the economy and over political organisations as France was drawn into war with Germany and the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) was outlawed and had largely withdrawn to the countryside in the central and the northern areas of Vietnam by 1940.¹⁹

In 1941 Hồ Chí Minh wrote a *Letter From Abroad*,²⁰ in which he signalled a marked change in the policies of the Indochinese Communist Party and, ultimately, in the techniques used to persuade Vietnamese people to join the cause of independence. As noted in the previous chapter, the *Letter* extols the patriotic activities of some of the ancestors of the Vietnamese people and also includes references to the insurgencies in Thái Nguyên, Yên Bái, Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh in the 1930s, which were discussed in the previous chapter. The message of the *Letter* was an appeal to patriotism, an appeal “to fellow-countrymen”.

Hồ Chí Minh seems to have begun real planning for a force that could fight for Vietnamese independence from about July 1940 (probably from the time he heard of the German occupation of France), although it was not until later in 1940 that he had sufficient authority within the Indochinese Communist Party to begin the organisation of such a group.²¹ The *Việt Nam Độc lập Đồng minh Hội* (Association of Allies for Vietnamese Independence, or *Việt Minh* for short) was formed in 1936 in China by (among others) Hồ Học Lãm and this was the vehicle that Hồ Chí Minh chose, from among a number of contenders, to be his for the armed liberation movement seeking independence for Vietnam.²² Hồ Chí Minh was most concerned that, in 1941 the Communist Party

¹⁸ See Phạm Xanh. *Hồ Chí Minh: the Nation and the Times 1911-1946*, 2nd edition. Hanoi: Thế Giới Publishers, 2008, pp. 102-105. These names may be aliases, as they do not seem to be either Táy or Nùng names.

¹⁹ Alexander B. Woodside. *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976, p. 215.

²⁰ See Hồ Chí Minh (1941). “Letter From Abroad”, translated by the publisher, in *Hồ Chí Minh: Selected Writings (1920-1969)*, pp. 44-46. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1973.

²¹ Hồ Chí Minh was generally critical of those whose enthusiasm led them to strike at the French colonial authorities without adequate preparation. He preferred to “keep his powder dry” until the people were ready for a general uprising. See Quinn-Judge. *Ho Chi Minh*, pp. 239-246.

²² See Quinn-Judge *Ho Chi Minh*, p. 247, although Brocheux states that “Clearly, then, it [the Việt Minh] was established by the Indochinese Communist Party”. See Brocheux *Ho Chi Minh*, p. 74.

“appeal to the nationalist sentiments of the Vietnamese people” and, to this end they must “encourage people to read about the history of Vietnam”.²³ The *Việt Minh* was officially chosen as the vehicle for independence at the Eighth Plenum of the Indochina Communist Party, which took place on 10-19 May 1941,²⁴ and David Marr points out that:

Ideologically, the Eighth Plenum resolution was most important for its indefinite deferral of specific working-class and poor peasant demands in favor of a “national liberation revolution” (*cách mạng giải phóng dân tộc*).²⁵

Mobilisation of the people towards national liberation, rather than demands for social change within a French colonial structure, was to be the focus of future *Việt Minh* efforts.

The Newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập*

In August of 1941 Hồ Chí Minh began producing a small newspaper called *Việt Nam Độc Lập* for the local-area rural communities.²⁶ In 1941 and 1942 he also produced a series of small propaganda booklets available for sale at a nominal price in the same area as the newspaper (see Chapter 1 for some comments on the different meaning of “propaganda” in Vietnam, particularly around the time period which is the subject of this study). The booklets were advertised in number 117 of *Việt Nam Độc Lập* (1 February 1942)²⁷ and were listed as:

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | <i>Chương trình và điều lệ V.M. 350 quyển</i> | Program and rules of the V.M. [Việt Minh]. 350 copies |
| 2. | <i>Kinh nghiệm Tàu... 500 quyển</i> | Experiences in China... 500 copies |
| 3. | <i>Cách đánh du-kích 250 quyển</i> | How to fight as a guerilla 250 copies |
| 4. | <i>Con đường giải phóng 200 quyển</i> | The road to liberation 200 copies |

²³ Quinn-Judge *Ho Chi Minh*, pp. 249-150.

²⁴ See Lê Kinh Lịch, ed. *The 30-Year War 1945-1975*, Vol. 1 (1945-1954) of 2. Hanoi: Thế Giới Publishers, 2000, pp. 1-2 and David G. Marr. *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, p. 167.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 170.

²⁶ See Phạm Mai Hùng (Head of Compilation Board). *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)* [The Newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* (1941-1945)]. (Originally published: as Newspaper series). Hanoi: NXB Lao Động for Bảo tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2000.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 63.

In addition, number 5 in the series was separately advertised as *Lịch sử Nước Ta* (History of our land).²⁸ Numbers 2 and 3 were first advertised for sale in issue number 105 of 10 September 1941.²⁹ Number 6 in the series is called *Việt Minh ngũ tự kinh* (Việt Minh five-character book), a small booklet describing, in 5-syllable rhyming lines, the *raison d'être* of the Việt Minh, and was advertised in number 124 of *Việt Nam Độc Lập* (1 May 1942).³⁰ The last two of these are the subject of analysis in a later section of this thesis. These publications were a radical change from earlier propaganda and appealed very directly to the people through deeply held folk traditions – they were more in the nature of information, or *tuyên truyền*.

Producing the Newspaper

The newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* was produced by employing very simple technology, making use of a roller on a flat rock, the paper probably being hand-made on the spot.³¹ The master copy was hand-written, at least up to the issue numbered 209 of 20 March 1945, and printed by a lithographic process. Lemon juice was needed during printing, to wash the ink of the previous print run from the smooth rock that was used in the lithographic process, and issue numbered 199 of 15 December 1944 makes an appeal for everyone to donate lemons to the newspaper in the words *Chanh! Chanh! Chanh! Nhà Báo cần chanh* (“Lemons! Lemons! Lemons! The publisher needs lemons.”).³² The quality of the lemons did not need to be high.

From August 1941 to August 1942, when he returned to China, Hồ Chí Minh himself produced more than 30 editions of this influential little newspaper.³³ Around four hundred copies of each issue were produced, the aim being three issues per month, each one comprising two pages. This compares with newspapers with a similar bent, such as

²⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 93.

³¹ Shawn McHale suspects that the Việt Minh made their own paper – see Shawn Frederick McHale. *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004, p. 130, and note 99 on p. 214. This would be feasible, and I have seen the process of making *giấy dó* (paper made from the bark of the *dó* tree) in operation at the *Bảo Tàng Dân Tộc Học* (Ethnology Museum) in Hanoi. A roller and lithographic stone which are purported to be those used in production of *Việt Nam Độc Lập* are on display at the Museum of the Revolution in Hanoi.

³² See Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 411.

³³ *ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

Dân Chúng, a city newspaper published in Saigon in 1938-1939, where the aim was for more frequent publication, on every Wednesday and Saturday, and for a larger broad-sheet format.³⁴ *Việt Nam Độc Lập* was not given away free, as people do not value things that are free, but was sold for one *hào* (10 cents) for 3 issues (one month), or \$1.20 for one year, payable in advance. Each hand-printed copy was delivered to villages in the Cao Bằng area by Việt Minh cadres, although Tønnesson is of the opinion that “Its key function was to provide the cadres with arguments to use in talking to the masses”.³⁵ To give the impression of an on-going venture, the first issue was given the serial number 101. The first 30 issues (numbered 101 to 129, there being two issues both numbered 118) were distributed only in Cao Bằng province, the next 57 issues (numbered 130 to 186) were distributed in Bắc Kạn province as well and issues numbered 187 to 235 proclaimed themselves the organ of the Việt Minh for three provinces – Cao Bằng, Bắc Kạn and Lạng Sơn.³⁶ After Hồ Chí Minh’s return to China, responsibility for production was taken over by Phạm Văn Đồng until April 1945.

Although the aim was for *Việt Nam độc Lập* to come out about 3 times per month, on the first, the eleventh and the twenty-first of each month, this was not always realised. At times of high news interest, copies came out more frequently. For example, the issue numbered 208 appeared on 13 March 1945, four days after the Japanese coup against the French, and the next issue was dated only 7 days later. At the time of the final stages of World War II in Europe in May 1945, the paper appeared every five days.

Compared with the material studied in Chapter 2, the newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* had a different approach to raising awareness and mobilisation. It was a newspaper written for the rural majority of Vietnamese, not a newspaper exclusively for sophisticated

³⁴ See Phạm Mai Hùng (Head of Compilation Board). *Báo Dân chúng (1938-1939)*. 3 vols, Vol. 2. (Originally published: as Newspaper Series). Hanoi: NXB Lao Động for Bảo Tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2000, pp. 5, 657-661.

³⁵ Stein Tønnesson. *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945: Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh and de Gaulle in a World at War*. London, Newbury Park, New Delhi: SAGE Publications (for PRIO International Peace Research Institute Oslo), 1991, p. 147.

³⁶ See Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập 1941-1945*. Note that similar data on page 5 of this collected edition are incorrect.

city folk. Many issues had a place in the header for a small aphorism, often written as a *ca dao* (folk saying) verse in *lục-bát* form.³⁷ The first issue has:

*Nhiều điều phủ lấy giá gương
Người trong một nước phải thương nhau cùng!*

That is:

The rich red silken brocade covers the rough crude mirror stand
The people of one country must care for one another

The language of this *ca dao* is not modern Vietnamese, and was not modern at the time it was used in the little newspaper.³⁸ The typical *ca dao* rhyming scheme is used, noted by the underlining in the printed example above. The meaning of the two lines is the same – the red brocade needs the rough stand to be displayed, the stand needs the brocade to cover its crude features. People need one another, no matter who they are. This particular *ca dao* has another interest, in that it is apparently very widely known throughout Vietnam. The first issue of *Việt Nam Độc Lập* was produced for the province of Cao Bằng, in the north of the country, very close to the Chinese border, and John Balaban found the same rhyme in use in the Mekong Delta in 1971, by a southern woman, born in 1898 near Saigon.³⁹ Thus it appears that some of the material used for the newspaper was drawn from folk traditions common throughout Vietnam.

The leading article of the first issue stresses independence for Vietnam, and finishes with the slogans:

*Kháng Pháp, kháng Nhật!
Thân Hoa!
“Việt Nam độc lập”!*

that is:

Oppose the French, oppose the Japanese!
Be friendly with China!
“Independence for Vietnam”!

³⁷ The *lục bát* form is a metric system used extensively in Vietnamese folk poetry. It consists of alternating lines of 6 and 8 syllables with a complex rhyming scheme and is discussed in more detail below.

³⁸ My translator friend, Lưu Thị Hải Yến remembers hearing this *ca dao* from her grandmother, but did not know the meanings of the individual words. She was born in 1984 in Nghệ An Province.

³⁹ In Balaban’s example the old woman incorporates it into her own song. See John Balaban. “Introduction”, in *Ca Dao Vietnam: A Bilingual Anthology of Vietnamese Folk Poetry*, pp 13-21, edited by John Balaban. Greensboro, North Carolina: Unicorn Press Inc, 1980, p. 20.

The contrast with the points raised in the slogans of the 1930s is quite apparent. This particular issue continued with news from within Vietnam concerning schools that had been set up to teach in the European way, and with a small article about the progress of the war in Europe (the only source of such information for the people of rural Cao Bằng). There was a “Garden of Literature” section, with a small poem (discussed in detail below), which was followed by a small article explaining how “national salvation associations” (*cứu quốc hội*) were being set up, affiliated with the Việt Minh with special organisations for youth and for women. The issue concludes with a list of people (nine in all) who were purported to have given monetary contributions to help with this new venture (the list includes two younger men, three younger women, one older man, one very old person, one official and one teacher).

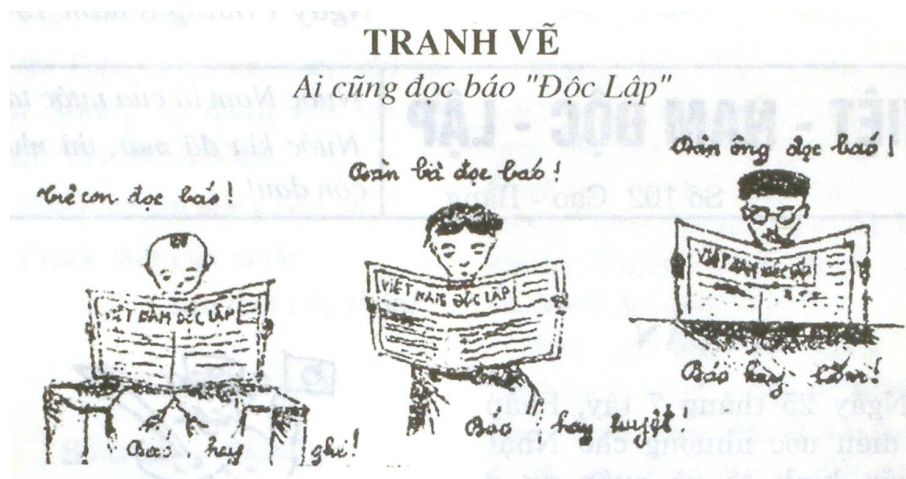


Illustration 3-2: Who else reads the newspaper? (DSCN2843a)

The newspaper also published, in its first issue, a small cartoon showing who else (besides the reader) reads this newspaper (see Illustration 3-2).⁴⁰ The cartoon proclaims that young children, men and women all read this newspaper and that they all express great interest, in their own idiomatic ways. The child is saying “*Báo hay ghê*” – “The newspaper is terribly interesting” – the woman’s words are “*Báo hay tuyệt*” – “The newspaper is excellent” – and the man is saying “*Báo hay lắm*” – “The newspaper is very interesting”. The cartoon immediately establishes a connection between reader and writer, by its simplicity and by its skilful, though apparently amateur, execution.

⁴⁰ The illustration has been copied from Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 11.

According to the historian Professor Văn Tạo (now retired), Hồ Chí Minh used this publication as a teaching example for journalists and a model of how to write for people of all classes. He encouraged aspiring reporters and writers to write a 1000-word piece then, when it was returned to him, asked them to reduce it to 500 words using simpler language and, finally, to reduce the essential ideas to 300 words.⁴¹ The same point is made in a 1945 review of Việt Minh activity entitled *Kinh Nghiệm Việt-Minh ở Việt-bắc* (“Experiences of the Việt Minh in Northern Vietnam”) which was discussed in Chapter 1:

*Báo Việt-Nam Độc-Lập đã giầy cho chúng ta một bài học to lớn: là tài liệu viết cho quần chúng phải hợp với trình độ quần chúng [sic, chúng is meant], phải phổ thông, dễ hiểu, vắn tắt.*⁴²

The newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* taught us a very big lesson: that is that written material for the masses must suit their level, it must be universal, easily understood, concise.

The review discusses four important types of propaganda materials used in northern Vietnam, apart from the newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập*, they were books, songs, exhibitions and the *Red Wind* propaganda team. The review was written for internal Việt Minh use, and covers the period up to the end of 1944.

The review also writes that:

*Báo mỗi tháng ra 3 kỳ và từ 100 số mỗi kỳ tăng lên đến 6,7 trăm và có thể tăng lên nữa nếu không phải hạn chế vì giấy mực mua quá khó.*⁴³

The newspaper appeared 3 times per month with 100 copies each issue, rising to 6 or 7 hundred and it could increase more but had to be restricted because of the difficulty of buying paper and ink.

The readership (and “listener-ship”) was much higher than these production figures indicate, since the paper was distributed by propaganda cadres (*cán bộ*) who encouraged the contents to be read aloud to village listening groups. Issue number 115, from 10 January 1942, asks for help for the newspaper by increasing the number of people who

⁴¹ Personal interview with Prof. Văn Tạo, 7 September 2002.

⁴² See *Kinh nghiệm Việt-minh ở Việt-bắc* (Originally published: 1945). Hà Nội: Tổng Bộ Việt Minh, 1946, p.14. A copy can be found in the People’s Army library in Hanoi. The publication has been reprinted in Đảng Cộng Sản Việt Nam Ương (Editorial Committee). *Văn Kiện Đảng 1930-1945 (Lưu Hành Nội Bộ) - Tập 3* [Party Documents 1930-1945 (For internal circulation) - Volume 3], Vol. 3 of 3. Hanoi: Ban Nghiên Cứu Lịch sử Đảng Trung Ương Xuất Bản, 1977, pp. 471-473.

⁴³ *Kinh Nghiệm Việt-minh ở Việt-bắc*, p. 14.

read it, buy it and give money. It urges cadres and people who have joined the Việt Minh to:

- 1) *Tìm thêm người đọc báo.*
- 2) *Tìm thêm người mua báo.*
- 3) *Tìm thêm người quyên tiền cho báo.*
- 4) *Tổ chức hội đọc báo, giảng báo.*
- 5) *Gởi tin tức cho báo.*⁴⁴

- 1) Find more people to read the newspaper.
- 2) Find more people to buy the newspaper.
- 3) Find more people to raise money for the newspaper.
- 4) Organise groups to read the paper, explain the paper.
- 5) Send news to the newspaper.

The reading groups were particularly organised by Việt Minh cadres for illiterate groups.

At a much later period newspapers were still considered important, with the 1948 booklet

Mười vấn đề kháng chiến advising cadres:

- b) *Read newspapers:* Each time the people have a newspaper, or afternoon or evening, when your fellow villagers are free, invite them to stop, read the news about the resistance, read the articles about calls to arms, then explain in a clear-cut way for your fellow villagers to hear. You should not just summarily read and not explain. Who can understand then understands, who can not understand then stops. If it is like that, then reading the newspaper is of no use.⁴⁵

The reading was to be active, as a prelude to discussion and debate, and was to engage the villagers with the ideas of the Resistance.

Monetary and other material contributions were solicited for *Việt Nam Độc Lập* and faithfully recorded in each issue. Not all payment was monetary. In the issue numbered 132 for 21 July 1942, for example, Miss L.A. and Miss T.Y. are thanked for their contribution of three crepe-rubber soles (for shoes), and Mrs Ph. is thanked for a bottle of fish sauce (*nước mắm*),⁴⁶ in the next issue, number 133 of 1 August 1942, Mr Q.T. is thanked for 40 eggs, Granny N.P. for seven pineapples, and Mrs Đ for a chicken and a bottle of wine.⁴⁷ The value for *Việt Nam Độc Lập* lies not only in the putative items

⁴⁴ See Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 54.

⁴⁵ *Mười vấn đề kháng chiến*. [Ten Matters about the Resistance]. Liên Khu IV: Sở Thông Tin Liên Khu IV, 1948, p. 29. This publication is available at the National Library of Vietnam, and the above translation is mine..

⁴⁶ See Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, pp. 122-123.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 125.

donated, but in the sense of, and feeling for, community engendered by such gifts and acknowledgements. The style of writing in *Việt Nam Độc Lập* is simple, rather like spoken Vietnamese, the readership is addressed as “brothers and sisters” (*anh chị em*), contributions (of money and goods) are acknowledged. There is poetry in almost every issue, and the newspaper takes a gentle view of itself, as this poem from issue number 132 shows. The “machine” had broken:

*Máy hỏng, nên chi Báo nhỏ tờ
Chữa xong. Báo sẽ rộng như xưa
Nhỏ to chi cùng là tờ Báo.
Anh chị em ta hãy tạm chờ.*⁴⁸

Machine broken, so Paper is a small one.
Repair finished. Paper will be large as
before.
Big or small it is still a Newspaper.
Our brothers and sisters must wait a
little.

One of the important messages to the people who came under the influence of *Việt Nam Độc Lập* was to keep secret the existence of the paper and Việt Minh organisational details. The issue that first proclaimed the publication as “The Organ of the Việt Minh” (issue numbered 187 of 30 January 1944) warned readers to *Bí mật!* (“Keep the secrets!”) three times on its masthead⁴⁹ and *Bí mật* is a theme running through many issues and was advocated as being especially necessary in opposing *khủng bố*, terrorism from the French and Japanese armies. Another regular theme is the history of the Vietnamese people. Issue numbered 154 of 1 March 1943 urged women (sisters – *chị em*) to remember the Trưng sisters (*Hai Bà Trưng* – Trưng Trắc and Trưng Nhị) and their fight against the Chinese in the year 43CE,⁵⁰ while issue numbered 160 of 1 May 1943 urged everyone to remember the fine battle tactics of the hero Prince Trần Hưng Đạo,⁵¹ who defeated the Mongol invaders on the Bạch Đằng river in Spring of the year 1288.⁵²

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 123.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 371.

⁵⁰ See Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 210 and Hà Văn Thù and Trần Hồng Đức, *A Brief Chronology of Vietnam's History*, pp. 15-16.

⁵¹ Trần Quốc Tuấn was known as “the Hưng Đạo Prince” - see John K. Whitmore. *Vietnam, Hồ Quý Ly, and the Ming (1371-1421)*. New Haven: Yale Southeast Asian Studies, 1985, p. 1.

⁵² See Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 234. For the story of Trần Quốc Tuấn alias Hưng Đạo đại Vương see Hà Văn Thù and Trần Hồng Đức *A Brief Chronology*, pp. 59-63 and 74-77. For a very interesting account of the battle, see Lê Năng Hiến. *Ba Chiến Thắng Bạch Đằng Giang: Three Victories on the Bach Dang River*, translated by Phan Ngọc. Hà Nội: NXB Văn hóa - Thông tin, 2003. Lê Năng Hiến is a painter and his account is an artist's response to the story.

The Garden of Literature (*Vườn văn*)

Many issues of *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập* contained a section entitled *Vườn văn* (“Garden of Literature”) which contained some verse – see Appendix C for an index of all of the verse that appeared in the *Vườn văn* section. The poetry in the little newspaper was important, even central, to the appeal of the paper, but has been very little studied to date. A recent publication from Vietnam reprints some of the poetry with some analysis of content, but none of style.⁵³ The title *Vườn văn* seems to have been special to Hồ Chí Minh since, from issue number 133 (1 August 1942) to number 193 (20 July 1944) there is no section with this title and this is the period when Hồ Chí Minh was in China, having gone there to try to consolidate international support for Vietnamese independence, but having been imprisoned instead.⁵⁴ Hồ Chí Minh had returned to Vietnam after an absence of 30 years (he left in 1911)⁵⁵ and it appears that his interest in poetry was something that he treasured to keep him in touch with his homeland. The poetry published in the *Vườn văn* section up to issue 126 was sold as a separate publication, described as “*hay lắm, đọc có ích lắm*” (“very interesting and very useful”), and costing 15 xu (15 cents – a very small amount).⁵⁶

The poetry that was produced in the *Vườn văn* section was nearly all in either the *lục-bát* form, the *song-thất* form or the *song-thất lục bát* form. The *lục-bát* form has alternating lines of six and eight syllables with a complex rhyming scheme, the *song-thất* verse has double lines of seven syllables each, and the *song-thất lục bát* form has pairs of seven-character lines followed by a six-eight pair.⁵⁷ An example of a *song-thất lục bát* poem is found in the very first issue.⁵⁸ The rhyming and metric scheme of this first poem is as

⁵³ Vũ Châu Quán. *Bác Hồ với Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập* [Uncle Hồ and the Newspaper 'Independent Vietnam']. Hà Nội: NXB Thanh Niên, 2008.

⁵⁴ See Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, pp. 263-276.

⁵⁵ Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, pp. 44-45.

⁵⁶ Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 129. The announcement says that the new publication included all poetry published “*đến 15 tháng 7 ta*”, that is to the 15th of the seventh month in the Vietnamese calendar (*âm lịch*). However, that would be 26 August 1942 and clearly impossible, since the announcement appeared in the issue for 11 August 1942. The following issue (number 135 of 21 August 1942) described the new book more fully.

⁵⁷ For a thorough description of these poetic forms, see Huỳnh Sanh Thông. “Introduction”, in *An Anthology of Vietnamese Poems: From the Eleventh through the Twentieth Centuries*, pp. 1-25, edited by Huỳnh Sanh Thông. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996, especially pp. 8-14.

⁵⁸ See Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, issue numbered 101, p. 10.

follows, the complex rhyming scheme shown by underlining, the number of syllables of each line is also shown:

<i>Đế quốc Pháp thật là ác <u>ng</u>hiệt</i>	7
<i>Làm dân ta như <u>đi</u>ếc, như <u>m</u>ù.</i>	7
<i>Làm ta dở dại dở <u>ng</u>u,</i>	6
<i>Biết gì việc nước biết <u>đ</u>âu việc <u>đ</u>ời.</i>	8
<i>Báo “Độc Lập” hợp <u>th</u>ời <u>đ</u>ệ <u>n</u>hất,</i>	7
<i>Làm cho ta mở <u>m</u>ắt mở <u>t</u>ai.</i>	7
<i>Cho ta biết đó biết <u>đ</u>ây,</i>	6
<i>Ở trong việc nước ở <u>ng</u>oài thế <u>g</u>ian.</i>	8
<i>Cho ta biết kết <u>đ</u>oàn <u>t</u>ổ <u>ch</u>ức,</i>	7
<i>Cho ta hay sức <u>l</u>ực của <u>t</u>a.</i>	7
<i>Cho ta biết chuyện gần <u>x</u>a</i>	6
<i>Cho ta biết nước non <u>t</u>a là gì.</i>	8
<i>Ai không chịu ngu <u>s</u>i mù <u>t</u>ối,</i>	7
<i>Ắt phải xem báo <u>á</u>y mới <u>n</u>ên.</i>	7
<i>Giúp cho báo <u>á</u>y vững <u>b</u>ền,</i>	6
<i>Càng ngày càng lớn càng <u>tr</u>uyền <u>k</u>hắp <u>n</u>ơi</i>	8
<i>Khuyến đồng bào nhớ bấy nhiều <u>l</u>ời.</i>	7

On the 7-7 pairs, the rhyme is on syllables 7 in the first line and 5 on the second line, the 7-6 lines rhyme on syllable 7 and 6 on the next line, the 6-8 pairs rhyme in the classical way, that is syllable 6 of the first line rhymes with syllable 6 of the second line, and syllable 8 introduces a new sound to rhyme on syllable 5 of the next line in the 8-7 pair. The subject matter of the poem is French colonialism and Vietnamese opposition to it:

French imperialism is really malicious,
 Makes our people as deaf and blind.
 Makes us fools,
 Who knows about the country, who knows about life.
 The *Independent* newspaper is in fashion, number one,
 Works for us, opening eyes, opening ears
 Lets us know this, know that
 Live within the country, live outside in the world
 Gives us unity and organisation
 Gives us our strength and interest
 Gives us knowledge from near and far
 Tells us what our country is
 Who cannot bear the blind fool,
 Should thus see this newspaper as new
 Help to make it stable
 Day by day becoming larger, becoming distributed everywhere
 Advising small countrymen with many words

It is also an explanation as to the purpose of this newspaper and it foreshadows a major campaign that the *Việt Minh* were to join, to raise the literacy rate among the population. Literacy was apparently a very desirable aim for Vietnamese and there was an explosion of interest in reading in the early part of the twentieth Century. David Marr comments that “Between 1920 and 1940 at least eighty-eight different [*quốc ngữ* learning] manuals in 364 editions were published, with a minimum total of 3.7 million copies”.⁵⁹ Literacy campaigning involved many activities and concerned people, especially among the school-age population, and was to be an important contributor to the nationalist cause. The references to being “blind” (*mù*) in the above verse seem to me to be designed to recall for the readers and listeners the illiterate (*mù chữ*) state of much of the rural population at the time.⁶⁰ The newspaper is presented as a way out of the ignorance besetting much of the countryside.

In all, about 102 pieces of verse were published in the newspaper over its lifetime, with a variety of metric and rhyming schemes. The metric schemes are summarised in Table 3-1, showing that the *song-thất lục-bát* scheme is used in about 30 percent of the verse (I am including uses of the *lục-bát song-thất* scheme in this number). 30 percent of the verse was in the *lục-bát* form only, commonly used in the oral folk verse called *ca dao*, and another 30 percent was in the *song-thất* form only.

Table 3-1: Metric schemes used in the *Vườn văn* poetry

Metric scheme	Number of occurrences	Proportion
<i>Lục-bát</i> (6-8)	31	30%
<i>Song-thất</i> (7-7)	30	29%
<i>Song-thất lục-bát</i> (7-7/6-8)	23	23%
<i>Lục-bát song-thất</i> (6-8/7-7)	7	7%
8-8	7	7%
5-5 (Chinese <i>lũ-shih</i>)	2	2%
6-6	1	1%

⁵⁹ David G. Marr. *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981, p. 176.

⁶⁰ See Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, p. 34 and p. 414.

Metric scheme	Number of occurrences	Proportion
Irregular	1	1%
Total	102	

There was obviously some pride in the literary achievements in the *Vườn văn* section, as indicated by the republication of the 30 pieces up to issue 135 (21 August 1942). The rhyming schemes used were discussed briefly in issue number 135, which advertised this *Việt Minh* song-book.⁶¹

What can one make of the use of these particular poetic forms? The writer of the poems (probably Hồ Chí Minh, in the main) calls them “songs” (*thơ ca*) and offers his opinion:

Thơ ca mỗi bài ngắn nhất là 8 câu, dài nhất là 50 câu. Nó có vần, có điệu, dễ học, dễ hiểu, dễ thuộc, dễ nhớ. Nó lại êm tai dễ nghe. Bất kỳ già trẻ, ai cũng học được. Bất kỳ khi nào, vừa làm vừa học cũng được.

Each poem is at least 8 lines and at most 50 lines. They all rhyme and have a tune, they are easy to learn, easy to understand, easy to recite, easy to remember. They are pleasant and easy to listen to. They are useful for young and old, who can also learn them. They are useful at any time, can be recalled while working or studying.⁶²

Hồ Chí Minh thus emphasises that the most important characteristic of his work, as he sees it, is the ease with which the poetry can be remembered and recalled easily, and can be used in song. There is considerable evidence that the literacy rate in the provinces of distribution was quite low at the time and it is known that poetic forms are often used in oral societies for the transmission of knowledge.⁶³ Thus, poems of this kind were probably included because they were thought to be particularly memorable, quotable and appealing. It appears to me that the answer to the appeal of these metric forms lies in an observation by that lover of all things literary in Vietnamese, the late Huỳnh Sanh Thông:

⁶¹ Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 132.

⁶² Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 132.

⁶³ See, for example, Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. London and New York: Methuen, 1982, and Rob Hurle, “Shannon Ahmad’s Writing: Echoes of an Oral Tradition”. BA(Hons) thesis, Faculty of Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1989.

In the last analysis, both verse forms [*lục-bát* and *song-thất*] can be traced to two basic meters that reproduce the common cadence of Vietnamese speech... Vietnamese sayings and proverbs are often folk poems in miniature.⁶⁴

Thông is telling us that, in his experience, these poetic forms are similar to the cadences of Vietnamese speech and thus fall naturally on the Vietnamese ear. Thông also points out that Vietnamese poetry was derived from the Chinese regulated *lǚ-shih* poetry but in a much more free form. Writing about Chinese poets, he points out that the rules under which they wrote “tended to detach the poet from the toiling masses and their mundane cares and isolate him in the most rarefied of atmospheres”, whereas in Vietnam “the regulated poem shed its haughty reserve and fastidious aloofness and went native”.⁶⁵ By “went native” Thông means that an essentially oral verse form, the *lục-bát* form as used in *ca dao* and other folk poetry, was used for written poetic works. As well as being used for the popular *ca dao*, which is made up and sung by farming families everywhere in Vietnam,⁶⁶ the *lục bát* form could be, and was, pressed into service for long written narrative poems, of which *The Tale of Kiều* written by Nguyễn Du is the most famous example.⁶⁷ John Balaban, who collected a number of *ca dao* in the south of Vietnam in 1971-72, gives an example of the way in which well-known *ca dao* are sometimes used to make up new songs. In his example the *ca dao* which was used on the masthead of the first issue of *Việt Nam Độc Lập* (discussed above on page 73) is used by an old woman singing while sewing to make up her own song remembering her dead mother.⁶⁸ *Song-thất* poetry could also “go native” as we see from the female poet Hồ Xuân Hương, who produced her work at the beginning of the nineteenth century. She used mainly the strict Chinese *lǚ-shih* form from which *song-thất* is derived, but wrote it in the Vietnamese demotic *nôm* script in order to hold the Vietnamese spoken language in her verse.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Huỳnh Sanh Thông, “Introduction” in *An Anthology of Vietnamese Poems*, p. 8.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶⁶ See John Balaban. “Introduction” in *Ca Dao Vietnam*, especially pp. 15-17, for a discussion on collecting these oral forms.

⁶⁷ See Nguyễn Du. *The Tale of Kiều - A Bilingual Edition of Truyện Kiều*, translated by Huỳnh Sanh Thông. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983.

⁶⁸ See John Balaban. “Introduction” in *Ca Dao Vietnam*, p. 20.

⁶⁹ See John Balaban. “Introduction”, in *Spring Essence: The Poetry of Hồ Xuân Hương*, pp 3-15, edited by John Balaban. Port Townsend: Copper Canyon Press, 2000, pp. 4-5.

Nearly all of the verse published in *Việt Nam Độc Lập* has a revolutionary or resistance focus. Even the “grief” verse has a national focus. Consider these *song-thất* lines from “a funeral oration for my wife’s mother” which appeared in issue numbered 147 on 21 December 1942:⁷⁰

*Nước Nam-Việt thành nhà ngục tối,
Giông Tiên Rồng e nổi diệt vong,*

This verse can be translated as:

The great land of *Nam-Việt* is a dark prison,
The race of the Fairy and the Dragon are ruined,

Nam-Việt is the old name for Vietnam and the “race of the fairy and the dragon” refers to the creation myth of the Vietnamese people, King Lạc Long Quân married Fairy Âu Cơ giving birth to 100 sons who were the ancestors of the Vietnamese ethnic groups, the *Bách Việt*.⁷¹ The reminder here, to the listeners of the verse, is that the Vietnamese comprise one ethnic and linguistic group, one people and one nation. The Vietnamese are not, in fact, one, and 54 ethnic groups are officially recognised in the country, with a number of different linguistic groups but the verse, in common with a great deal of the material in the newspaper, tries to forge unity by assuming unity.

A constant theme of the articles and poetry in *Việt Nam Độc Lập* is that of unity. The history lessons in the newspaper construct a shared history and recall ancient battles where the “Vietnamese people” rose up against oppressors (usually Chinese) and this idea is developed to a larger extent in a small booklet call *Lịch sử Nước ta* published in the same way as *Việt Nam độc Lập* in 1942 (Chapter 4 contains further discussion about *Lịch sử Nước ta*). Some of the calls to unity are quite overt, such as in the history lesson about the 13th Century hero Trần Hưng Đạo from issue 160 of 1 May 1943,⁷² which concludes:

Kết luận. Chuyện Trần-Hưng-Đạo để lại cho ta một bài học: muốn đánh quân giặc xâm lấn nước ta cần hai điều: một là toàn dân đoàn kết, hai là khéo dùng lối du kích!

⁷⁰ See Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, issue numbered 147, p. 184.

⁷¹ See Hà Văn Thư and Trần Hồng Đức. *A Brief Chronology*, p. 3.

⁷² See Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, pp. 234-235.

Conclusion. The story of Trần Hưng Đạo gives us a lesson: if we want to fight an army that is invading our country, we need two things: one, all of the people must be united; two, we must cleverly make use of guerillas.

Other historical and mythical references are more subtle, but are nonetheless powerfully evocative, as in the lament mentioned above. Some of the unity poems would have had a special appeal to rural dwellers in the more-or-less self-sufficient environment in northern Vietnam. Consider “The thread’s song” from issue number 122, dated 1 April 1942:⁷³

Cà sợi chỉ

Mẹ tôi là một đóa hoa,
Thân tôi trong sạch, tôi là cái bông.
Xưa tôi yếu ớt vô cùng,
Ai vò cũng đứt, ai rung cũng rời,

Khi tôi đã thành chỉ rồi,
Cũng còn yếu lắm ăn ngồi không ngon,
Mạnh gì sợi chỉ con con,

Không thiêng biết có vương tròn cho
chăng
Càng dài lại càng mỏng manh,
Thế gian ai sợ chỉ anh chỉ xoàng!

Nhờ tôi có nhiều đồng bang,
Hợp nhau sợi đợc, sợi ngang rất nhiều,

Dệt nên tấm vải mỹ miều
Đã bền hơn lụa lại điều hơn da.

Đố ai bứt xé cho ra,
Đó là lực lượng, đó là vẻ vang

Hỡi ai con Hồng Bàng,
Chúng ta phải biết kết đoàn mau mau
Yêu nhau xin nhớ lời nhau,

Việt-Minh hội ấy mau mau phải vào

The thread’s song

My mother is a beautiful flower,
Inside my body is white, I am cotton,
Days of old I was feeble and tangled,
Anyone can crumple, break, shake me
loose,
When I had become a thread,
I was still very weak just alive,
What strength does a little thread
have,
No magic power can tell what use can
best be made of me
Becoming thinner as I become longer,
Is anyone in the world afraid of such a
plain one!
But, thanks to my many companions,
Threads meeting together, many
threads lying together,
Together weaving a beautiful cloth
Stronger than silk but brighter than
leather.

Challenging anyone to tear it
That is power, that is glory

Calling all children of *Hồng Bàng*,⁷⁴
We must have unity, quickly, quickly,
Those who love one another,
remember to speak together,
Must quickly join the Việt Minh.

⁷³ See Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 85.

⁷⁴ In the mythical origin story, the Hồng Bàng family gave rise to Lạc Long Quân, the common ancestor of the Vietnamese people. See Hà Văn Thù and Trần Hồng Đức, *A Brief Chronology*, p 3.

Given the date of publication, this poem was probably written by Hồ Chí Minh since he seems to have written the *Vườn văn* section up until August 1942.⁷⁵ The writer uses a process familiar to most of his readers and listeners, that of loose cotton being spun first into thread and then the thread being woven into cloth, as a metaphor to show that unity is strength and that the only way the Vietnamese people, those descended from the Hồng Bàng family, will achieve power and glory is by uniting together. Naturally, the Việt Minh is the only association mentioned that is able to achieve this unity and glory.

The question arises as to why was it important to publish poetry in a small newspaper distributed to farmers in a small region in the north of Vietnam? I speculate that it was one way (probably of considerable importance) to touch people deeply, and a way to reach people who would possibly be immune to mere sloganeering.

Within-country News (*Tin Trong Nước*)

In common with other newspapers produced in the latter part of the 1930s and early 1940s,⁷⁶ almost every issue of *Việt Nam Độc Lập* carried a small section entitled “Within-country News” or “Home News” (*Tin Trong Nước*) – a summary of the series is shown in Appendix D. The title itself is significant. It is not giving the readers news of “the village”, “the district”, or even “the province”. It gives news of the country, the *nước*, thus establishing *Việt Nam* as an entity in its own right, and an entity to which the readership, in some sense, belongs.

In 1942, articles about the Việt Minh and Việt Minh booklets were advertised as early as February of that year. In an early issue, number 117 of 1 February 1942, the tone is very self-congratulatory as the Việt Minh explains how good, effective and important is its *tuyên truyền* and how important the organisation is for the future.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Vũ Châu Quán includes this poem in the list of those written by Hồ Chí Minh (see Vũ Châu Quán. *Bác Hồ với Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập*, p. 50) and it is also included in the collected works of Hồ Chí Minh (see Hồ Chí Minh. *Toàn Tập*, Vol. 3 (2-1930 to 2-9-1945) of 10. Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Sự Thật for Viện Mác - Lênin, 1983, p. 226).

⁷⁶ See, for example, the issues of *Giải Phóng* reprinted in Phạm Mai Hùng (Head of Compilation Board). *Giải phóng 1934-1935-1936*. (Originally published: as Newspaper series). Hanoi: NXB Lao Động for Bảo Tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 1998.

⁷⁷ See Chapter 1 for an explanation of the relationship between *tuyên truyền* and “propaganda”.

1) *Việt-Minh* các nơi mỗi ngày mỗi phát triển. Gần đây đoàn thể có tổ chức một cuộc tuyên truyền rất lớn: Suốt trong 7 ngày chỗ nào cũng có truyền đơn, diễn thuyết, biểu tình, treo cờ ngôi sao hô hào đồng bào đoàn kết dưới ngọn cờ *Việt-Minh*. Cuộc tuyên truyền ấy rất có ảnh hưởng. Khắp nơi công nhân, nông dân, thanh niên, phụ nữ kéo nhau vào *Việt-Minh* rất đông, người có tiền giúp tiền, kẻ có sức giúp sức.⁷⁸

1) The *Việt Minh* everywhere, every day is developing. Recently the organisation has prepared a large amount of propaganda: over seven days everywhere has leaflets, speeches, demonstrations, raising the red flag with the star, calling on compatriots to unite under the flag of the *Việt Minh*. This propaganda has had a very great effect. Everywhere workers, farmers, youth, women are drawn together to join the *Việt Minh* crowd, people with money help with money, those who have power to help, help in that way.

At the time that this was written, the *Việt Minh* was a very new organisation and it was important to get information out about what could be achieved if it was supported. The tone of this short summary of the successes of the *Việt Minh* is very positive, making the organisation sound more important than it could have actually been at the time. Nevertheless, it is very encouraging, urging people, by example, to join and to help in any way in which they can. Unity is, as with a great deal of the material under study here, of paramount importance. The Communist connections to the *Việt Minh* are not mentioned here but, later on this became an issue, with a spirited defence of the organisation being mounted in issue number 190 of 1 April 1944, the whole of the newspaper being devoted to the defence against those who are claiming that the *Việt Minh* is a communist front beholden to Russia.⁷⁹

In early issues of *Việt Nam Độc Lập* the “Home News” section tended to print stories of an anti-colonial or anti-Japanese nature, such as complaints about both French and Japanese soldiers taking goods and either not paying for them, or paying much less than they were worth. Another common complaint was the removal of young men from the villages to impress them into the colonial army. For example, issue number 113 of around 9 December 1941 (it is incorrectly dated as 1 December 1941) told of how the French had lost their country and that Japan was now at war against America and other nations (this

⁷⁸ Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 62.

⁷⁹ Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, pp. 381-386.

issue was published after the Pearl Harbour attack on 8 December 1941 (Japanese and Vietnamese time)). The worries expressed in *Việt Nam Độc Lập* were put this way:⁸⁰

Nhật đang đánh nhau với Anh, Mỹ, Tàu và nước khác. Nó không đủ lính Tây sẽ bắt lính ta - khổ xanh, khổ đỏ, lính đông, lính cơ đi chết thay cho Nhật. Mười mấy vạn lính ta đã chết cho Pháp, phơi xương đất người. Nay lại phải chết thay cho Nhật!

Japan is now fighting against England, America, China and other countries. They don't have enough French soldiers and will take us – green belts, red belts, courageous soldiers, soldiers of opportunity to die instead of Japanese.

Tens of ten thousands of our soldiers have already died instead of French, people lie as dry bones in the ground. Now they must die for the Japanese!

followed by exhortations to the soldiers in the colonial army to join the masses and turn their guns on the French and Japanese.

Issue number 129 of 21 June 1942 celebrated two years since France surrendered to Germany in World War Two,⁸¹ listing great losses on the part of France, but the “Home News” section was more concerned with the impact on the common people of the loss of rice stock to the colonial powers in a section which contains some use of the vernacular:

Vì ai mà đói kém?

Nước ta là một nước nhiều gạo thóc.

Trước kia mỗi năm bán ra các nước hơn 1 triệu rưỡi tấn gạo (1 tấn là 1 nghìn cân tây). Khi Nhật mới qua, nó lại bắt Tây phải nộp cho nó mỗi tháng 15 vạn tấn gạo. Bây giờ nó lại bắt Tây vơ vét được bao nhiêu gạo phải nộp cho nó cả.

...

Nếu ta không đoàn kết mà đánh Nhật, đánh Tây thì chắc sống không nổi!

Who wants famine?

Our country is one with a big store of rice.

Previously we could sell more than 1 and a half million tonnes of rice (1 tonne is 1 thousand kilograms, western measure) to other countries each year. Since the Japanese have come, they have forced the French to procure for them 150 thousand tons of rice each month. Now they again force the French to pillage more rice and they must take it all for them.

...

If we do not unite and fight the Japanese, fight the French, then surely life will not arise!

⁸⁰ Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 48.

⁸¹ The armistice between France and Germany was signed on 22 June 1940, but this issue of *Việt Nam Độc Lập* notes the surrender as being on 25 June 1940.

It seems that it was necessary to explain western measures, as in the use of the word *tấn* (tonne), to the readers, and this extract uses *vạn* for ten thousand. Large numbers are generally represented this way throughout *Việt Nam Độc Lập*, for example when discussing casualties, or the sizes of armies.

From the time of Hồ Chí Minh's return from captivity in China in August 1944, more reports in *Tin Trong Nước* began to be about preparations for *cách mạng* (revolution) and *khởi nghĩa* (uprising), and to warnings of impending famines became more serious as more and more rice was confiscated by the French and Japanese and more and more land given over to farming non-edibles, such as jute. Other stories which appeared were about bombing throughout Vietnam, north, south and centre, by the American, British and Chinese Air Forces, in order to deny infrastructure to the Japanese armed forces. There were warnings about the "trickery" of French colonial authorities, involving such things as trying to attract Vietnamese youth to join the Marshall Pétain youth groups. Talk of revolution increased from early 1945 and, after May 1945 when Hồ Chí Minh seems to have left the Cao Bằng area to begin making his way to Hanoi via Tân Trào,⁸² nearly all issues made revolution their main story. The issue of 20 August 1945 (number 226) announced that the time had come for the Revolution,⁸³ although this was a little after the Việt Minh's "Military Order Number 1", issued by the leadership on 13 August 1945,⁸⁴ and even after the extraordinary events in Hanoi on 19 August 1945.⁸⁵ Uprisings did not take

⁸² David Marr quotes a number of sources which note that Hồ Chí Minh was in Hanoi on 26 August 1945 (see Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, p. 489), having arrived shortly before then. I suspect that he began the journey from Cao Bằng in mid-July, since the *Vườn Ván* section of *Việt Nam Độc Lập* ceased from 10 July 1945, and this section of the newspaper seems to have been rather special to Hồ Chí Minh (but maybe he left some poetry behind for other editors to use). Vietnamese histories have him arriving in Tân Trào from Cao Bằng on 21 May 1945, see Trần Hữu Đính and Lê Trung Dũng, *Cách mạng tháng tám 1945: Những sự kiện lịch sử*. Hanoi: NXB Khoa Học Xã Hội for Viện Sử Học Trung Tâm Khoa Học Xã Hội và Nhân Văn Quốc Gia, 2000, p. 222. He was in Tân Trào for meetings from 13 to 16 August, see Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, pp. 367-373. Archimedes Patti implies that Hồ Chí Minh left for Tân Trào before June 1945, see Patti, *Why Viet Nam?*, p. 124, and that he was unequivocally there on 16 July 1945, *ibid.*, pp. 127-129. See also Võ Nguyên Giáp, "Từ Pắc Bó Đến Tân Trào", in *Bác Hồ ở Tân Trào*, pp. 17-41, edited by Đinh Lực, Trần Thị Lợi and Phạm Thị Thịnh. Hanoi: NXB Chính Trị Quốc Gia for Bảo Tàng Tân Trào - ATK, 2001, pp. 34-39.

⁸³ Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 554.

⁸⁴ See Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, p. 366. The order was apparently issued at 11pm on 13 August, see Trần Hữu Đính and Lê Trung Dũng, *Cách mạng tháng tám 1945*, p. 250.

⁸⁵ Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, pp. 395-401. See also Trần Hữu Đính and Lê Trung Dũng, *Cách mạng tháng tám 1945*, pp. 289-308.

place in Bắc Cạn until 21 August, in Cao Bằng until 22 August and in Lạng Sơn on 25 August.⁸⁶

Tiến Quân Ca Vietnamese National Anthem

Đoàn quân Việt Nam đi Chung lòng cứu quốc Bước chân
Nam đi Sao vàng phấp phới Dắt giống
dòn vang trên đường gập ghềnh ra Cờ in máu chiến thắng mang hồn
nòi quê hương qua nơi lầm than. Cùng chung sức phấn đấu xây đời
nước, Súng ngoài xa chen khúc quân hành ca Đường vinh quang xây xác quân
mới, Đứng đều lên gông xích ta đập tan. Từ bao lâu ta nuốt căm
thù, Thắng gian lao cùng nhau lập chiến khu. Vì nhân dân chiến đấu không
hờn, Quyết hy sinh đời ta tươi thắm hơn. Vì nhân dân chiến đấu không
ngừng Tiến mau ra sa trường, Tiến lên, Cùng tiến
ngừng, Tiến mau ra sa trường, Tiến lên, Cùng tiến
lên. Nước non Việt Nam ta vững bền Đoàn quân Việt
lên, Nước non Việt Nam ta vững bền.

Music engraving by LilyPond 2.12.3—www.lilypond.org

Illustration 3-3: Vietnamese National Anthem

⁸⁶ See Trần Hữu Đính and Lê Trung Dũng. *Cách mạng tháng tám 1945*, pp. 328-329 for Bắc Cạn and pp. 341-342 for Cao Bằng and pp. 379-380 for Lạng Sơn.

Tiến Quân Ca

Việt Nam Độc Lập 30 October 1945, tr. 576

Đoàn quân V M đi Chung lòng cứu quốc Bước chân
Đoàn quân V. M. đi sao vàng phát phối Giắt giồng

dồn vang trên đường gập ghềnh xa Cờ in máu chiến thắng mang hồn
nòi quê hương qua nơi đầm than Cùng chung sức kiến thiết xây đời

nước Súng đằng xa chen khúc quân hành ca Đường vinh quang xây sắc quân
mối Đứng đều gông tận Dù thấy tan xương nát khôn

thù Thắng gian lao đoàn Việt lập chiến khu Thề nhanh thầy uống máu quân
sờn, Gắng hy - sinh đời ta tươi thắm hơn Từ bao lâu ta nhốt cãm

thù Tiến mau ra sa trường Tiến lên Cung
hồn Vô trang đầu! Lên đường! Hối ai! Lòng

toét lên Trí trai là đây nơi ước nguyện
chớ quên! Bắc Sơn cùng Đồ-lương, Thái - nguyên.

Music engraving by LilyPond 2.12.3—www.lilypond.org

Illustration 3-4: Việt Minh Marching song

Towards the end of the run of the newspaper, in issue number 231 for 30 October 1945, a prototype of a Vietnamese national anthem was published and is shown in Illustration 3-4.⁸⁷ This particular version of the “Marching Song” celebrates the Việt Minh and not “Việt Nam” as such (compare with the modern Vietnamese national anthem shown at Illustration 3-3). The music is the same, save that the Việt Minh marching song is in the

⁸⁷ Transcribed from Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 576 and typeset using the Lilypond music publishing software package.

key of G and is more appropriate for untrained men's voices than the B flat version of the National Anthem shown in Illustration 3-3, which is better suited to a brass band and voices that have had some training.

***Tin Thế Giới* – News of the World**

Almost every issue carried a small column entitled *Tin Thế Giới* (“World News”) of news, mainly on the progress of World War II in Europe, the information probably obtained by the Việt Minh from short-wave radio. Colonial wartime censorship prevented most people in Vietnam obtaining news from outside the country⁸⁸ and, for the largely rural readership, *Việt Nam Độc Lập* would have been a source of such information, unavailable even in the urban areas, which could keep them in touch with faraway events and provide an analysis of the impact that these events would have. For example, issue numbered 207 of 4 March 1945 informed the readership that:

Recently the three leaders of Russia, England and America met in conference in the Crimea in Russia in order to discuss many important matters about the task of fighting the fascists, and preserving world peace. The three countries have decided to create an international assembly, in San Francisco, to preserve world peace, and to invite all peace-loving countries to become members.⁸⁹

and added, hopefully, that “the question of our Vietnam will be considered at the San Francisco assembly”. The following issue was produced soon after, on 13 March 1945, and announced the Japanese coup against the French in the following words:

A Big Change In Indochina

Japanese fascists remove the French

Over the several days 8, 9, 10, 11 March 1945, that is 24 25, 26 27 of the first month of our calendar,⁹⁰ a very important change occurred all over Indochina. In many places the Japanese fascist army seized the French military and political apparatus and, according to the understanding which our reporter received, the Japanese fascist army holds control over all of Indochina.⁹¹

⁸⁸ See McHale, *Print and Power*, pp. 57-58.

⁸⁹ See Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 444. The conference “in the Crimea” is the Yalta conference at the end of World War II in Europe, and the San Francisco meeting referred to is the establishment of the United Nations.

⁹⁰ That is, the first lunar month of the year Ất Dậu.

⁹¹ See Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 449.

The reference to “our calendar” and the lunar calendar dates in this particular article is important in establishing contact with the rural community, but it is a little unusual in the newspaper, in that the dates on the masthead is in the western solar calendar format. In this same issue, the position of the *Việt Minh* towards the former French masters is conciliatory and sympathetic:

Our Attitude Towards the French

In the course of this change, French people will suffer from Japanese terror, especially those French people who intend to resist Japan.

With regard to those French who want to oppose the Japanese, and who suffer Japanese terror, we must express friendship, and if they want to join hands with us in fighting the Japanese, then we are pleased to take part. As for individuals, if they request help from us in any matter that we are able, then we should be willing to help.⁹²

Many of the French people badly affected were in the somewhat isolated rural areas of Cao Bằng, Bắc Kạn and Lạng Sơn, where there were French garrisons. The Japanese forces apparently killed possibly more than two hundred French soldiers in the garrison at Lạng Sơn between 9 and 12 March 1945.⁹³ There are reports that many more French soldiers were killed at Lạng Sơn, with one report (of unknown reliability) stating “What followed was a massacre: the whole garrison, some 1500 to 2000 men, were slaughtered. There was but one survivor in a bloody pile of tangled bodies”.⁹⁴ French soldiers, and many civilians, in the larger cities were imprisoned.

Most of the world news told by *Việt Nam Độc Lập* concerns the fighting between Russia and Germany, and it is probable that the writers received most of their information through short-wave radio. Most of the events are described accurately and in a timely way, for example, the Vietnamese readers learned on 15 June 1944 about Allied landings in France and the opening of the “second front” that took place between 6-12 June⁹⁵ and, on 5 May 1945, they read of the 29 April capitulation of Germany.⁹⁶ Issue numbered 225 of 10 August 1945⁹⁷ is more concerned with the local movement of guerrilla units around Cao

⁹² See Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 451.

⁹³ Marr *Vietnam 1945*, pp. 59-60.

⁹⁴ Mandaley Perkins. *Hanoi, adieu. A bittersweet memoir of French Indochina*. Sydney: Fourth Estate, HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005, p. 137.

⁹⁵ See Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, issue numbered 192, p. 392.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, issue numbered 215, p. 490.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 547-553.

Bằng, Bắc Kạn, Thái Nguyên and Ba Đình than with the use of an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and the Russian declaration of war against Japan on 9 August rates more importance than the use of a *bom khổng lồ mới* (“new huge bomb”) against the city of *I-rô-di-ma* (Hiroshima) by the US against Japan.

Other Newspapers

After the events of 1945, the August Revolution and the subsequent declaration of independence on 2 September 1945, intellectuals and writers in the north of Vietnam had more scope for self-expression and for the promulgation and discussion of political ideas. In response to this opportunity many new publications appeared. The combined issue numbers 4 and 5 of *Tiên Phong*, celebrating *Tết Nguyên Đán* for the year *Bính Tuất* (2 February 1946) and released on 25 January 1946, advertised for people to act as agents for the distribution of sixteen publications, described as “newspapers” (*báo*),⁹⁸ although some of these would more correctly be called “magazines” and appeared monthly. The titles give some idea of the concerns of those responsible for these publications:

<i>Độc Lập</i>	Independence
<i>Đồng Minh</i>	Allies
<i>Hồn Nước</i>	Spirit of our Land
<i>Kiến Thiết</i>	Construction
<i>Tiên Phong</i>	Vanguard
<i>Đồng Ruộng</i>	The Rice Field
<i>Chiến Thắng</i>	Victory
<i>Tiếng Gọi Phụ Nữ</i>	Women’s Call
<i>Cứu Quốc</i>	Save the Nation
<i>Gió Mới</i>	New Wind
<i>Tấc Đất</i>	Every Inch ⁹⁹
<i>Sự Thật</i>	The Truth
<i>Dân Chủ</i>	Democracy
<i>Xung Phong</i>	To Battle
<i>Tân Việt Nam</i>	New Vietnam
<i>La République</i>	The Republic (Fr.)

⁹⁸ Lại Nguyên Ân, Ngô Văn Phú and Nguyễn Kiên, eds. *Sưu tập trọn bộ Tiên Phong (1945-1946) (Tập một)*, Vol. 1 of 2. Hanoi: NXB Hội Nhà văn, 1996, p. 234.

⁹⁹ The translation here refers to the saying *mỗi tấc đất Việt Nam là của người Việt Nam* “every inch of Vietnam belongs to the Vietnamese”.

The newspaper *Cứu Quốc* had been published clandestinely prior to 1946, during the Japanese occupation but, unlike *Việt Nam Độc Lập* had a largely urban readership.

Summary

This chapter has focussed mainly on a small rural newspaper with limited circulation during the 1940s. *Việt Nam Độc Lập* was produced under difficult circumstances and at a difficult time, while Vietnam was under two masters – the Japanese and French. Nevertheless it takes an optimistic view of the prospects for an end to colonisation and French domination, in spite of many exhortations to *đánh đuổi Pháp*, *đánh đuổi Nhật* (fight and expel the French, fight and expel the Japanese). It sees the way forward for Vietnam as needing popular *khởi nghĩa* (uprising) and *cách mạng* (revolution) supported by a great unity of purpose on behalf of the people. The vision for Vietnam is the achievement of independence within a few years, a hope also enunciated in Hồ Chí Minh's little publication *Lịch sử Nước Ta*, which is the subject of the next chapter and which correctly (and perhaps fortuitously) forecast independence being achieved in 1945.

But I believe that the most important and far-reaching influence that the newspaper had was in the development and consolidation of a sense of community, and it also changed people's perceptions of their own community, placing it into a wider context, making it more of an international player, setting the stage for revolution against the Japanese and French overlords, even placing independence for Vietnam into a global context. The uprisings and seizure of power by Vietnamese people occurred in August, the call for which was issued from Tân Trào by the Countrywide Uprising Committee (*Ủy ban khởi nghĩa toàn quốc*) at 11pm on 13 August 1945 – the members being Trường Chinh (General Secretary), Võ Nguyên Giáp, Trần Đăng Ninh and Chu Văn Tấn.¹⁰⁰ The announcement of the call was made in issue number 226 of 20 August 1945 of *Việt Nam Độc Lập*,¹⁰¹ uprisings then followed the call a few days later in Bắc Cạn, Cao Bằng and in Lạng Sơn.

¹⁰⁰ Trần Hữu Đính and Lê Trung Dũng, *Cách mạng tháng tám 1945*, p. 250.

¹⁰¹ Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 554.

Chapter 4

Training the Cadres

The previous chapter discussed propaganda in the form of a newspaper directed towards the general public in its target area. It contained local news, national and international news and its tone was firmly based on the lived experiences of the farmers working and living in the *Việt bắc* (northern Vietnam). The Việt Minh propaganda team also produced a number of booklets, advertised in the newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập*, but directed towards a slightly more sophisticated readership – those who had formally joined the Việt Minh, the *hội viên* or cadres. Two of these booklets are discussed in this chapter: *Lịch sử Nước Ta* (History of our land), advertised in issue number 117 of 1 February 1942,¹ and; *Việt Minh ngũ tự kinh* (Việt Minh book of pentameters), advertised in issue number 124 of 1 May 1942.² As discussed in the previous chapter, both of these are purported to have been written by Hồ Chí Minh after he returned to Vietnam in 1941. *Lịch sử Nước Ta* appears in the 1983 edition of the collected works of Hồ Chí Minh,³ but *Việt Minh ngũ tự kinh* does not, casting some doubt upon the authorship of the latter. The hand-writing in the booklet of *Lịch sử Nước Ta* is, according to staff at the Museum of the Revolution,⁴ that of Hồ Chí Minh himself, although there is no way to independently verify this. The hand-writing in the two is very similar, as can be seen by comparing Illustration 4-1, which is a facsimile of Page 7 of *Việt Minh ngũ tự kinh*, with Illustration 4-2, which is a facsimile of the first text page of *Lịch sử Nước ta*. Note the capital “T” and capital “H”, which are quite distinctive. I conclude that both originals were most likely to have been written by the same hand, but I do not have enough information to say if it was that of Hồ Chí Minh or a scribe he employed. A complete facsimile, transcription and translation of *Lịch sử Nước Ta* appears as Appendix B and a transcription and translation of a 1944 edition of *Việt Minh ngũ tự kinh* is contained in Appendix E. *Lịch sử Nước Ta* is available in modern editions (there are even copies on the Internet) but I have not been able to find *Việt Minh*

¹ See Phạm Mai Hùng (Head of Compilation Board), *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập* (1941-1945) [The Newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* (1941-1945)]. (Originally published: as Newspaper series). Hanoi: NXB Lao Động for Bảo Tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2000, pp. 61-62.

² *ibid.*, p. 93.

³ Hồ Chí Minh (1942). “Lịch sử nước ta”, in *Toàn Tập*, Vol. 3 of 10, pp. 215-224. Hà Nội: Viện Mác - Lê-nin, 1983.

⁴ This was reported to me by Mrs Ngô Thị Ba who, very sadly, has since suffered an incapacitating stroke.

ngũ tự kinh outside of museums and archives in Vietnam. Modern versions of *Lịch sử Nước Ta* differ from the version shown in Appendix B, which was copied from a 1942 copy held at the Museum of the Revolution in Hanoi. Some discussion on the differences appears below. Neither publication has received much scholarly attention, although there is an article from 1973 referencing both. The author of that article is looking at Hồ Chí Minh's educational and mobilisation activities whilst he was at Pác Bó.⁵

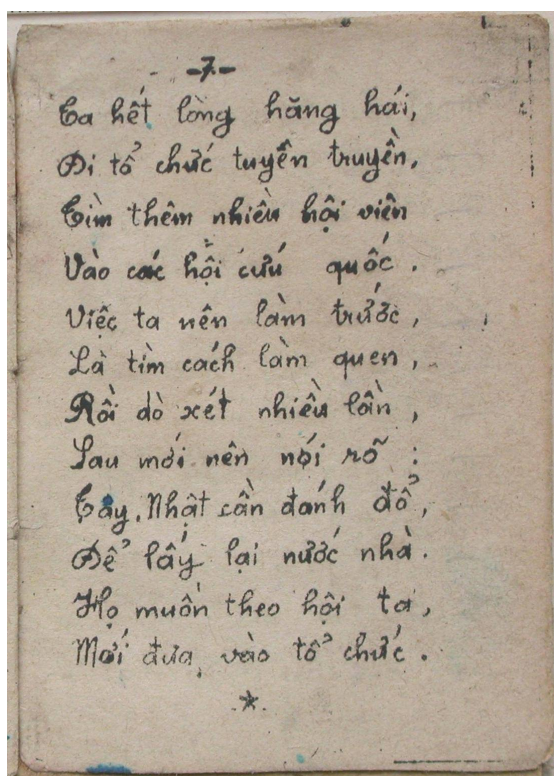


Illustration 4-1: Page 7 of *Việt Minh ngũ tự kinh* (original).

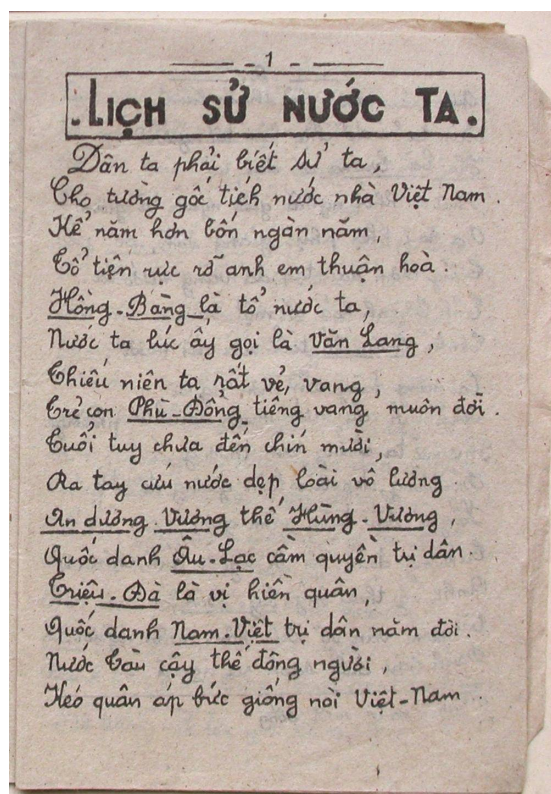


Illustration 4-2: First page of *Lịch sử Nước ta* (original).

Using History to Persuade: *Lịch sử Nước Ta*

As discussed in Chapter 2, prior to the 1940s most of the mobilisation material and propaganda from the Communist Party and other political groups comprised slogans printed on banners and leaflets and, until the 1940s, much of the content of the propaganda was concerned with international communism and the problems of social class, particularly as regards lower-paid urban workers in an industrialised society.

⁵ Phan Ngọc Liên. "Tìm Hiểu về Công tác Vận động, Giáo dục Quần chúng của Hồ Chủ Tịch trong Thời gian Người ở Pác-bó", *Nghiên cứu Lịch sử*, no. 149 (March-April, 1973): 13-21,30.

However, as discussed in Chapter 3, Hồ Chí Minh's *Letter From Abroad*⁶ signalled a new approach and his arrival in the *Việt bắc* in January 1941 began a new phase in the use of *tuyên truyền* to persuade and mobilise the peasantry. Shortly after writing the *Letter*,⁷ Hồ Chí Minh began production of the newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* and the little booklet entitled *Lịch sử Nước Ta* followed soon after.

Lịch sử Nước Ta is presented as carrying the marks of a more-or-less “high class” publication – it has a publisher's imprint (*VM Tuyên Truyền Bộ Xuất Bản* – Published by the Việt Minh Propaganda⁸ Department), it costs money and it is number 5 in a series of publications. The copy of *Lịch sử* reproduced in Appendix B is from photographs made in 2002 at the Museum of the Revolution in Hanoi, where it has the catalogue number 1988/Gy660 (the photograph numbers have been used as my catalogue numbers for individual pages). It is not known how many copies were produced, but there is apparently at least one other copy still in existence, owned by Mr Nguyễn Thành Đàm who lives in the Hỏa Lò area in Hanoi but I have not yet had a chance to see this copy.⁹ The copy in the Museum archives is, as can be seen from the photographs, in reasonable condition for its age, although there is some discolouration in the paper. As far as I can discover, the original text of *Lịch sử Nước Ta*, complete with pictures, has not been published again since 1942. The text of the newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* has been republished, but with only a few pages printed as facsimile.¹⁰

The booklet has been written so that the people will understand their history and so be moved to join the fight for independence and, as such, it constitutes a new technique of persuasion and *tuyên truyền* used in the rural areas of northern Vietnam.¹¹ The technical

⁶ Hồ Chí Minh (1941). “Letter From Abroad”, translated by the publisher, in *Hồ Chí Minh: Selected Writings (1920-1969)*, pp. 44-46. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1973.

⁷ The date on the Letter is 6 June 1941, which indicates that it was actually written while Hồ Chí Minh was in Vietnam, in the Cao Bằng area.

⁸ It is worth noting that the word “propaganda” has a different meaning in Vietnamese to the normal usage in English. See my comments on this matter in Chapter 1.

⁹ Reported by the newspaper *Việt Báo* on 29 May 2005. See <http://vietbao.vn/Van-hoa/San-hinh-cua-sach/40080863/181/> (accessed 15 February 2011).

¹⁰ See Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*.

¹¹ A number of histories were published in the 1920s and 1930s (and earlier), directed at a popular audience, such as those by Phan Bội Châu and Trần Trọng Kim, but they were largely distributed in urban areas and were not specifically produced for the rural *Việt bắc*.

choices used by Hồ Chí Minh in producing both *Việt Nam Độc Lập* and *Lịch sử Nước Ta* are remarkable for the meanings within them. He has used a type of paper made, and readily available, in his target villages in the north of Vietnam. He used a technology that is widely in use and is easily recognised in the same area, that of hand-writing and mimeography, yet the writing is “modern”, in that the text is in *quốc ngữ* characters and not the, by then, old-fashioned Chinese-like *nôm* characters. Part of the message, then, is in the medium that is used to convey it – these characteristics of the medium would have enhanced the reputation of the publication as being “authentic” in the target area, as being produced by “one of us”.

The text of *Lịch sử Nước Ta* has been republished since the original publication and is apparently still in use in schools in at least some areas in Vietnam.¹² The text is also available in several versions on the Internet.¹³ The republished versions differ in several respects from the original as presented here, in that they have had the spelling of some words modernised, for example *san* becomes *son*, and *dòng* becomes *giòng*. One notable change in all of the newly published versions that I have seen, as well as that published in the 1983 edition of the collected works of Hồ Chí Minh,¹⁴ is the omission of lines 13 and 14 on page 1 of the original text purportedly in Hồ Chí Minh’s hand:

*Triệu-Đà là vị hiền quân
Quốc danh Nam-Việt trị dân năm đời*

*Triệu-Đà was a wise leader
Ruled the people of Nam-Việt for five reigns.*

The omission of these lines in the collected works raises doubts about the accuracy of that publication. The reason why these lines have been omitted is a matter for conjecture but it most probably has to do with the fact that Triệu Đà (“Chao T’o” or “Zhao Tuo” in Chinese) was originally a Chinese official who took power in the south of China and northern Vietnam after the death of the Ch’in emperor in 210 BCE and the subsequent

¹² Hồ Chí Minh. *Lịch sử Nước Ta*. (Originally published: 1942, by the Việt Minh Tuyên Truyền Bộ Xuất Bản). Hanoi: NXB Chính Trị Quốc Gia for Bảo Tàng Tân Trào - ATK, 2001.

¹³ See, for example, <http://www.ninhthuan.vnpost.vn/cmhc/newstb.asp?il=2&id=373> (accessed 8 February 2011) and <http://ewormvn.wordpress.com/2010/11/14/lich-su-nuoc-ta-ho-chi-minh/> (accessed 8 February 2011).

¹⁴ Hồ Chí Minh (1942). “Lịch sử nước ta”, in *Toàn Tập*, Vol. 3 of 10, p. 215.

descent into warfare between the remaining Ch'in loyalists and insurgents led by Liu Pang (the future Hán emperor) and Hsiang Yü.¹⁵ Triệu Đà defeated the Vietnamese king An Dương Vương in battle, however, according to O.W. Wolters, was:

...remembered by later Vietnamese historians as a king who defended their lands against Chinese aggression.¹⁶

He ruled over much of what is called the northern part of Vietnam now, as well as the two southern Chinese provinces of Kwangsi and Kwangtung.¹⁷ Vietnamese historians today seem to consider Triệu Đà himself as a Chinese invader and consequently can not be seen as a “wise leader”. Đào Duy Anh (1904-1988), a well-known historian and teacher from Thanh Hóa and Hanoi, devoted more than a page of his self-published textbook (1955) *Cổ sử Việt Nam* (Ancient History of Vietnam) to a discussion of the Triệu reign and concludes that the “House of Triệu does not constitute a dynasty [in the Vietnamese sense]”.¹⁸ In 1956 he further wrote that:

*Nước Âu-lạc thành lập chưa được ba chục năm thì bị Triệu Đà nước Nam-việt uy hiếp mà mất. Từ đó người Âu-lạc bắt đầu sống dưới sự áp bức của giai cấp thống trị ngoài tộc.*¹⁹

The land of *Âu Lạc* had not yet been established for thirty years when *Triệu Đà* intimidated *Nam Việt*, which was lost. From then on, the *Âu Lạc* people began to live under the tyranny of a foreign ruling class.

Trần Trọng Kim, writing in 1921, provides only a cursory treatment of Triệu Đà but says that he “proclaimed himself king [of Nam Việt]”.²⁰ Lê Văn Hưu, in his commentary from the 1272 *Đại Việt Sử Ký* holds Triệu Đà up as an example of what could be possible for a powerful Vietnamese king. As quoted in a modern printing of the *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư* (which is the 1479 version compiled by Ngô Sĩ Liên supplemented to 1697 by various other authors) Lê Văn Hưu comments on Triệu Đà are written as:

¹⁵ Witold Rodzinski. *A History of China*, Vol. 1 of 2. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1979, pp. 50-52.

¹⁶ Quoted by Keith Taylor in Keith Weller Taylor. *The Birth of Vietnam*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1983, pp. 26-27. See pp. 23-27 for an account of the life of Chao T'o.

¹⁷ See Oscar Chapuis. *A History of Vietnam: From Hong Bang to Tu Duc*. Westport, Connecticut; London: Greenwood Press, 1995, p. 182.

¹⁸ Đào Duy Anh. *Cổ sử Việt Nam*. Hanoi: Tác Giả Xuất Bản, 1955, pp. 99-101.

¹⁹ See Đào Duy Anh. *Lịch sử Việt Nam: Từ nguồn gốc đến cuối thế kỷ mười chín (Chuyên san)*, Vol. 1. Hanoi: Đại Học Sư Phạm (Tập san), 1956, p. 33.

²⁰ See Trần Trọng Kim. *Việt Nam Sử Lược*, Vol. 1 of 2. (Originally published: 1921). Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh: NXB Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh, 2000, p. 29.

*Triệu Vũ Đế khai thác đất Việt ta mà tự làm đế trong nước, đối ngang hàng với nhà Hán, gửi thư xưng là lão phu, là người mở đầu cơ nghiệp đế vương cho nước Việt ta, công ấy cũng to lắm vậy.*²¹

Emperor Triệu Đà not only developed²² our Việt land but also made himself emperor of the country, on a par with the Hán dynasty in China, sending a letter calling himself an old man, the one founding a legacy of emperors for our country of the Việt, a very important work.

Ngô Sĩ Liên's own commentary on the Triệu Đà story seems to imply that Triệu Đà himself did no harm, but the rest of the Triệu dynasty was not so benign.²³ Michael Churchman's linguistic work supports the view that labelling Triệu Đà as either "Vietnamese" or "Chinese" is inappropriate, and that he chose the name *Nam Việt* (*Nan Yue* in Churchman's transcription) "for his independent kingdom centred on modern Canton". There was no "land of the Việt" before then.²⁴ Thus it appears that, for Hồ Chí Minh, the example of a wise, firm leader is enough, even though the leader was not "Vietnamese" in the modern sense. Hồ Chí Minh seems to have had a relatively sophisticated concept of the evolution of the "Vietnamese" as, in his history neither the Chinese as a separate polity (and as "greedy hordes"), nor the land of *Nam Việt*, appear until after Triệu Đà's empire.

The *Lịch sử* is an outline of the history of Vietnam and, in a long-standing Vietnamese demotic tradition,²⁵ it is written in the popular poetic form known as *lục bát* (six-eight), as is commonly used in popular *ca dao* sayings and songs and in some epic poems. The *lục bát* poetic form was discussed extensively in the previous chapter. To recap, in this poetic

²¹ Ngô Sĩ Liên and Lê Văn Hưu. *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư*, Vol. 1 of 2. (Originally published: various times since 1272 and 1479, latest 1697). Hà Nội: NXB Văn Hóa Thông Tin, 2004 p. 93.

²² *khai thác đất* can be translated as "exploited the land", but that would be "exploited" in the sense of "exploited the minerals in the land", not in the sense of "exploiting the people". Hence I have decided that "developed the land" is a better choice for the translation. See the extensive examples in Bùi Phụng. *Từ điển Việt-Anh: Vietnamese English Dictionary*. Hanoi: NXB Thế Giới, 2000, p. 972, particularly the explanation of *khai thác đất đô thị* as "urban land development".

²³ Ngô Sĩ Liên and Lê Văn Hưu, *Đại Việt*, Vol 1, p. 93.

²⁴ Michael Churchman. "Before Chinese and Vietnamese in the Red River Plain: The Han-Tang Period" *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies*, vol. 4 (2010): pp. 25-37.

²⁵ Possibly the earliest body of Vietnamese poetry written in *quốc ngữ* script is that from the priest Philipphê Bình (1759-1832) recounting his travels to Portugal. See George Dutton. "Crossing Oceans, Crossing Boundaries: The Remarkable Life of Philipphê Bình (1759-1832)", in *Việt Nam: Borderless Histories*, 219-255, edited by Nhung Tuyet Tran and Anthony J. S. Reid. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006, pp. 249-251 for a discussion of his poetry.

form each couplet consists of a 6-syllable line followed by an 8-syllable line.²⁶ The rhyming scheme is such that syllable 6 of the first line of the couplet rhymes with syllable 6 of the second line, and then syllable 8 of the second line rhymes with syllable 6 of the first line of the next couplet, and so on. For example, the first few lines of the *History* read:

*Dân ta phải biết sử ta,
Cho tường gốc tích nước nhà Việt Nam
Kể năm hơn bốn ngàn năm,
Tổ tiên rục rở anh em thuận hoà*

The text, being in a poetic form that is widely acceptable to the Vietnamese ear, is easily memorised by people used to this form.²⁷ Sometimes the rhymes are somewhat forced but, equally, in many places the writer deliberately alters the words to achieve the rhyming scheme. For example, on page 7 of the text, the older form *đà* is used instead of the more usual *đã* (already) to achieve a rhyme, and word order is often reversed to achieve the rhyming scheme – there are more examples shown throughout the text reproduced in Appendix B.

Hồ Chí Minh also uses a number of poetic terms of some beauty to refer to the land of Vietnam. Five times in the text he uses the term *giang-sơn* (usually as *giang-san*) to refer to Vietnam and one time he uses *san hà* (a Sino-Việt form). The meaning of these phrases is “rivers and mountains”, referring to the two elements which symbolically define the beauty of their land for many Vietnamese people.

Hồ Chí Minh’s history does not directly tell the story of the mythical dragon king Lạc Long Quân and his wife, the fairy Âu Cơ who gave birth to a sack of 100 eggs, the mythical progenitors of the Vietnamese people, a myth that seems to have been first included in the history of the Việt people by Ngô Sĩ Liên in his 1479 history.²⁸ However, elements of the myth appear five times in Hồ Chí Minh’s history as the Vietnamese people are referred to as “the children of the dragon and the fairy” and Vietnam is referred to as the land of Âu-

²⁶ For a discussion of various Vietnamese poetic forms, see Huỳnh Sanh Thông. “Introduction”, in *An Anthology of Vietnamese Poems: From the Eleventh through the Twentieth Centuries*, pp. 1-25, edited by Huỳnh Sanh Thông. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996.

²⁷ Personal observation. While in Vietnam on field-work in 2002 some of my Vietnamese assistants were able to recite sections of Hồ Chí Minh’s text from memory. They were women in their early 20s.

²⁸ See Hà Văn Thư and Trần Hồng Đức. *A Brief Chronology of Vietnam's History*. Hanoi: NXB Thế Giới, 2000, 3, Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam*, 303-305 and Ngô Sĩ Liên and Lê Văn Hưu *Đại Việt*, Vol 1, pp. 64-71.

Lạc, referring to the legend of the dragon and fairy. The origin myths are very widely known in Vietnam²⁹ and Hồ Chí Minh's allusions to them marks the writer at once as being of the same community as his readers.

All history is, of course, constructed and studying the construction here enables us to gain some insight into the thinking of Hồ Chí Minh at the time he wrote the booklet. The booklet appears to have been written for some “average” person – the *dân chúng* in the Vietnamese vernacular. It is instructive, but it takes a particular view of Vietnamese history, one that sees the Vietnamese people marching forward to a goal, the key part of which is independence for a unified modern Vietnamese nation, the formation of which he successfully predicts, on page 14 of the text, as occurring in 1945. In this respect, Hồ Chí Minh is following the work of 20th Century writers such as Phan Bội Châu,³⁰ but national narratives of the Việt people date at least from the first appearance of the *Đại Việt Sử Ký* originally written by Lê Văn Hưu during the reign of Trần Thánh Tông and presented to the king in 1272.³¹ These national narratives are not, of course, the only ones that provide an historical perspective, nor are they as fully comprehensive as they sometimes purport to be. They serve a purpose intended by the author. Thus, Hồ Chí Minh is here, in part, showing us his idea of what he would like his readers to believe a Vietnamese “nation” could be – he is defining that concept as he describes the trajectory of the Vietnamese people over the course of time. Importantly, he was writing at a time when those Vietnamese people who aspired to independence were dispirited after several failed attempts at uprising a decade or so previously (as discussed in Chapter 2) and at a time when French activity had left “the Indochinese Communist Party in complete disarray”.³² His history is written, in part, to revive the revolutionary spirit.

²⁹ Personal observations.

³⁰ See Nhung Tuyet Tran and Anthony J. S. Reid. “The Construction of Vietnamese Historical Identities”, Introduction in *Việt Nam: Borderless Histories*, pp. 3-22, edited by Nhung Tuyet Tran and Anthony J. S. Reid. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006, p. 7.

³¹ See Hà Văn Thư and Trần Hồng Đức *A Brief Chronology* 57-58. The latest version of the *Đại Việt Sử* was published in 1697, using *Nôm* characters, in the reign of Lê Hy Tông and it has been reprinted a number of times since. See also Nguyễn Khánh Toàn, Phan Huy Lê and Phạm Hựu (Editorial Board). *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư (Dịch theo bản khắc in năm chính hòa thứ 18 (1697))*, translated by Ngô Đức Thọ and Hà Văn Tân. 2 vols. Hà Nội: NXB Khoa Học Xã Hội, 1983.

³² David G. Marr. *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981, p. 415.

The question arises as to what aspects of Vietnamese history Hồ Chí Minh has selected to show his readers, and is there any way in which we can analyse this to give us a clear picture of his choices? The number of pages devoted to each historical period seems to be a good place to start. His history devotes one page for the first few thousand years of Vietnamese history (although, as noted above, there is a question about whether we can distinguish a unique Việt history for this period) but two pages for 57 years of resistance against the French colonisers in the later part of the Nineteenth and early part of the Twentieth Centuries. Clearly, the 57 years of resistance history is more important to Hồ Chí Minh's story than the first few thousand years of Việt history – remembering that this is relative importance and the early history is still vital to his story. Devoting more space to recent events is a common feature of many histories but there are three periods within Hồ Chí Minh's history which do not fit into such a general pattern, in that more space is given over to them than is warranted by the number of years involved. These periods occur on pages 7, 8 and 9 of the text:

Page 7 covers the Lê kingdom after the defeat of the Chinese Ming invaders by Lê Lợi, and includes the period where the kingdom was split into two with the Trịnh lords ruling in the north and Nguyễn lords in the south – a period of about 350 years in one page, a rate of 0.3 pages per 100 years;³³

Page 8 covers the rule by the *Tây Sơn* brothers, Nguyễn Nhạc, Nguyễn Lữ and Nguyễn Huệ – about 24 years in one page, a rate of 4.2 pages per 100 years;

Page 9 covers the period of rule of the Nguyễn kings from 1802 up to the end of the reign of Tự Đức (1883) – 81 years in one page, a rate of 1.2 pages per 100 years.

³³ Vietnam was forcefully divided from about 1558, when Nguyễn Hoàng went to the south, up until 1778 when unity was achieved under the *Tây Sơn* brothers. The Lê dynasty nominally held power during this time of division, but the whole period, starting from before 1558, was marked by internal conflict between the Lê, Mạc, Trịnh and Nguyễn families.

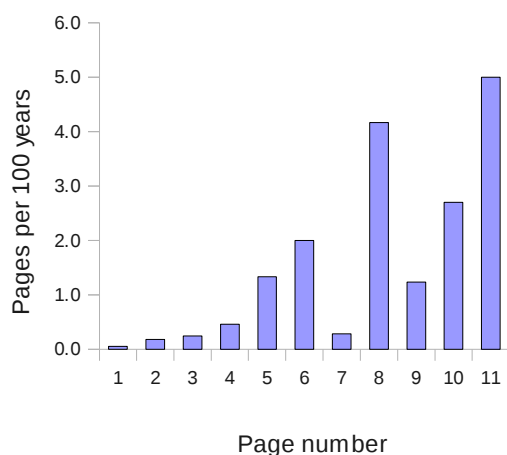


Illustration 4-3: Number of Pages devoted to each 100 years of Vietnamese History (excluding picture pages).

In other words, the *Tây Sơn* are given proportionally much more space than the Nguyễn kings and much more than the entire period of divided rule. Significantly therefore, the *Tây Sơn* period (page 8) is second only to the most recent past in terms of the number of pages per year. Illustration 4-3 demonstrates this analysis showing the general trend and the anomalies for pages 7, 8 and 9. In the graph shown in the Illustration, the bars represent, for each page, the equivalent number of pages devoted to each 100 years of Vietnamese history so that, for example, page 6 covers approximately 50 years, that is a rate of 2 pages per 100 years, whereas page 10 covers approximately 37 years or a rate of 2.7 pages per 100 years. Pages 12 and 13 of the text are omitted from this analysis, since they contain mainly calls to action and do not advance the historical narrative.

I hypothesise that the reason why the period of approximately 350 years of internal conflict (which includes the 220 years of division, during which the Trịnh family held effective power in the north and the Nguyễn family that in the south) is accorded so little space in Hồ Chí Minh's narrative is that one of Hồ Chí Minh's main concerns is with unity of the people. He correctly saw that only a unified people could achieve their goal of a free and independent Vietnam. More concern with the period of division would have taken something from his message of unity spelt out elsewhere in the text and most particularly in the final line of his history.

On page 9 of the text Hồ Chí Minh treats the Nguyễn dynasty with something approaching contempt (he covers only the years 1802-1883). Of the kings, he mentions only Gia Long by name (on page 8 of the text) and sums up the dynasty's reign by telling his readers that Vietnam (and by implication, the Vietnamese people) was sold to the French by the Nguyễn like so much chattel. At the time the *History* was written, the Nguyễn dynasty nominally ruled only the central part of Vietnam (Annam) through the Emperor Bảo Đại, however he was merely a puppet of the French administration. Bruce Lockhart describes the French Governor-General Decoux's attitude towards the Emperor:

Decoux did not believe that Bảo Đại had suffered a loss of either dignity or prestige because of his situation, and the Frenchman argued that it would be wrong to describe the Emperor as being resigned to a difficult situation. Rather, he claimed, Bảo Đại remained fully informed of official matters, and in any case he conformed to the tradition whereby the Emperor "reigns but does not govern." (Decoux believed that this represented normalcy rather than frustration for Bảo Đại).³⁴

Clearly Decoux had control of the land as Governor-General, and Bảo Đại was merely a figurehead. In Hồ Chí Minh's view, the responsibility for the humiliating colonial predicament of Vietnam is sheeted home firmly to the royal family – as he writes on page 9 of the *Lịch sử*:

Now our country is lost our home broken,
Because of the very stupid gang of rulers.

The message is that the ordinary people have been let down by their leaders and thus legitimacy can be conferred upon others who could seize power.

The *Tây Sơn* brothers are presented by Hồ Chí Minh in a particularly attractive way – the people feel grief and sorrow at the division of their country until a hero (Nguyễn Huệ) arises to seize the crown and to save the people. Primary sources, as well as recent studies, point out that the period before the *Tây Sơn* took power was very harsh on the people, characterised by high taxes, mismanagement of the trading opportunities presented by visiting Europeans and a disastrous famine in 1786, but there is little evidence that the

³⁴ Bruce McFarland Lockhart. *The End of the Vietnamese Monarchy*. New Haven: Council on Southeast Asia Studies, Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1993, pp. 123-124.

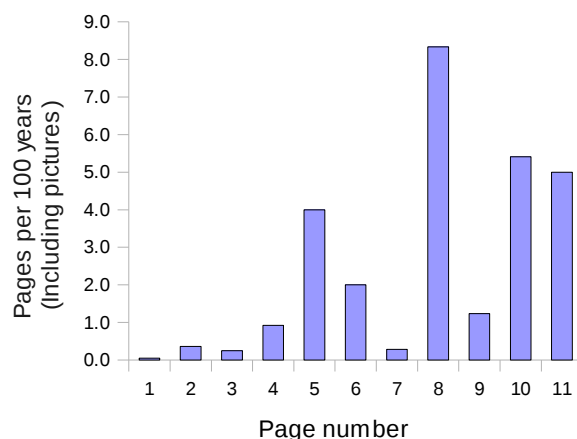


Illustration 4-4: Number of Pages devoted to each 100 years of Vietnamese History (including picture pages)

peasants were motivated by a desire to unify the country.³⁵ The *Tây Sơn* brothers were able to raise large armies from among the people, largely because they were seen to fight against an oppressive ruling class extracting exorbitant taxes from the peasantry.³⁶ Li Tana has pointed out that the *Tây Sơn* phenomenon arose largely because of the successful expansion into the south of Vietnam (a region known as *Đàng Trong*) and the subsequent over-extension of the administrative abilities of the Nguyễn regime.³⁷ Eventually the *Tây Sơn* venture came to an end, with “open political discord within the *Tây Sơn* ranks” appearing from 1786,³⁸ followed by the death of Nguyễn Huệ (by then ruling as Emperor Quang Trung) in 1792 leading to “the end of *Tây Sơn* political aspirations”.³⁹ George Dutton’s analysis of the uprising leads him to suggest that “the *Tây Sơn* leaders were not innovators or revolutionaries, but political opportunists”.⁴⁰ Hồ Chí Minh, on the other hand, describes the *Tây Sơn* brothers as “people’s heroes” and sees them as marking the beginning of the end of the feudal era and the rule of the Lê kings, an opportunity lost by the rise of the talentless Gia Long (Nguyễn Phúc Ánh).

³⁵ George Dutton. *The Tây Sơn Uprising: Society and Rebellion in Eighteenth-Century Vietnam*. (Originally published: 2006, University of Hawai’i Press). Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2008, pp. 29-36.

³⁶ Dutton, *The Tây Sơn Uprising*, p. 36.

³⁷ See Li Tana. *Nguyễn Cochinchina: Southern Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Ithaca, New York: SEAP, Cornell University, 1998, pp. 141-144

³⁸ Dutton, *The Tây Sơn Uprising*, p. 102.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 116.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 116.

The text of *Lịch sử Nước Ta* is enhanced by pictures, purportedly drawn by Hồ Chí Minh,⁴¹ which show six figures which he sees as important enough to be drawn by hand (probably on wax stencils – no easy task). They are all leaders who fought for independence for Vietnam – Hai Bà Trưng (the two Trưng sisters, against the Chinese in 43),⁴² Lý Thường Kiệt (against the Chinese, eleventh Century),⁴³ Trần Quốc Tuấn (Trần Hưng Đạo) (against the Mongols, end of the thirteenth Century),⁴⁴ Trần Quang Tồn (against the Chinese, end of the thirteenth Century),⁴⁵ Bùi Thị Xuân (for the *Tây Sơn*, end of the eighteenth Century)⁴⁶ and Đê Thám (against the French, nineteenth Century).⁴⁷ Including these picture pages in the above analysis produces the results seen in Illustration 4-4. In this case we can see even more clearly the importance accorded the *Tây Sơn* (page 8 of the text and one picture page) by Hồ Chí Minh and it is also apparent that the Trần dynasty (page 5 and two picture pages) is seen by him as one of the more important episodes in Vietnam's past. Inclusion of the pictures shows that, proportionately, the *Tây Sơn* period is accorded most space in the history, followed by the period of French colonisation and resistance, and the Trần dynasty ranks as number 4 in importance.

A central theme of the history is *khởi nghĩa* – uprising. Most of Hồ Chí Minh's heroes are that because they have led uprisings against one oppressor or another. The word *khởi nghĩa* occurs eight times in the text and eight times in the list of important dates on pages 13 and 14. In my view this is quite significant and illustrates that one of the purposes of the text is to encourage another uprising during the 1940s. In this context it is significant that the list of important dates finishes with the achievement of independence in 1945, a rather hopeful prediction, since the booklet was written in 1942.

⁴¹ Information from staff at the Museum of the Revolution.

⁴² See Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam*, pp. 38-41.

⁴³ See Hà Văn Thư and Trần Hồng Đức, *A Brief Chronology*, pp. 49-50.

⁴⁴ See Hà Văn Thư and Trần Hồng Đức, *A Brief Chronology*, pp. 74-77.

⁴⁵ See Hà Văn Thư and Trần Hồng Đức, *A Brief Chronology*, pp. 83-84.

⁴⁶ See Chapuis, *A History of Vietnam*, p. 143.

⁴⁷ See Oscar Chapuis, *The Last Emperors of Vietnam: From Tu Duc to Bao Dai*. Westport, Connecticut; London: Greenwood Press, 2000, pp. 89-91.

Another theme running through the history is that of unity – which is spelled out in a number of different Vietnamese words, principally *đoàn kết*, although other terms are used. There are five references to the concept of “unity” in the general text and the idea is used five times just on page 13 as the writer sums up the lessons of his Vietnamese history. Often it is the lack of unity – particularly within the ruling family – which leads to the land being lost, and it is the ability to unify the people which makes the leaders successful.

In the text of the history there are no clues as to what form of Government Hồ Chí Minh thinks is appropriate for an independent Vietnam. There is, however, a fond respect for the institution of the Monarchy, in spite of the obvious distaste for the Nguyễn family who, from 1806, used the title of “Emperor” (*Hoàng đế*) rather than “King” (*vua*).⁴⁸ On every one of the first eight pages there is reference to the good qualities of a king (as well as to a number of generals):

Page 1	Triệu Đà is a “wise leader”.	From 207 BCE.
Page 2	Lý Bôn has talents of “pen and sword”. The early Lý dynasty.	From 544.
Page 3	Đinh Tiên Hoàng “skilfully built up the capital”; Lê Đại Hành “scattered the Song army, fought Champa”. Early Lê dynasty.	From 968. From 980.
Page 4	Lý Thái Tổ “developed our national culture” and “built dykes”. ⁴⁹ The Trần dynasty provided “peace within the country, external enemies defeated”.	From 1010. From 1225.
Page 5	The glorious Trần dynasty. No kings are mentioned individually, but the heroes are Trần Hưng Đạo and Trần Quang Toản.	
Page 6	The Lê dynasty has “great intellectual and military capacity”, there is “a prosperous people”. The 12 reigns are “famous and respected”.	From 1428.
Page 7	The great king Lê Thánh Tôn “wisely developed once again secure borders”.	From 1460.

⁴⁸ Chapuis. *A History of Vietnam*, p. 183.

⁴⁹ The reference to building dykes is of great importance to the people of the Red River delta, as it is the only way that they can sustain rice cultivation. Any leader who can cause the dyke system to be maintained has fed his people and is deserving of great respect.

Page 8	Nguyễn Huệ (king Quang Trung) was “an exceptional individual” with “high intelligence, very caring”.	From 1788
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Respect for the monarchy then drops off, as the Nguyễn kings are depicted as surrendering Vietnam and its people to the French.

It is also worth mentioning the special place that Hồ Chí Minh sees in Vietnamese history for women – but women as heroes, rarely as rulers. He mentions the two Trưng sisters (Hai Bà Trưng) (page 2 of the text) and Triệu Ẩu (page 2) as “our extraordinary women”, and Bùi Thị Xuân (page 8) who fought for the *Tây Sơn* brothers.

As mentioned above, the medium that Hồ Chí Minh has used carries its own clear message. The paper appears to be “home-made” in the same manner as *dó* paper,⁵⁰ just as could be made in any one of many Vietnamese villages. The only technologies used are hand-writing, a technology that was and is wide-spread in Vietnam, and mimeographing,⁵¹ another readily available technology. These techniques were very familiar to the people to whom the publication is directed and so it appears to them to belong to their world. The readership thus has a sense of ownership of the publication and, by extension, an ownership of the ideas in it. Although distributed, largely to cadres, in rural areas it has some things about it that mark it as a serious “city” publication, such as a publisher’s name, a number (5) in a series of booklets and a price. By association, the ideas expressed can also be taken seriously, as from a new political elite.

The manner of the writing also carries its own message. It is simple and down-to-earth language and in the popular *lục bát* form. The message behind this style of writing is that the concepts being portrayed are, like the writing, ideas which can be understood and held by ordinary folk. Even if there is an elite group of leaders behind the Việt Minh they are ordinary people just like the people who will read this text.

⁵⁰ See Bùi Văn Vượng. *From Dó Paper to Vietnamese Folk Prints (Từ giấy dó đến tranh dân gian Việt Nam)*. Hanoi: NXB Thế Giới, 2003 for a description of the manufacture of *dó* type papers.

⁵¹ That is, using wax stencils to control the transfer of ink to paper.

The writer is careful to instil a sense of pride in a once-great land. He uses respected poetic forms of the Chinese language as symbols of the beauty of Vietnam and the integrity of the nascent nation, making allusion to the supposed common mythical heritage which unites all Vietnamese. Although he does not spell out the magic of the origin myths explicitly, his readership is asked to remember them, to recall such mythical heroes as the child of Phù Đổng village⁵² and the Hùng kings. The heroes that the writer refers to are the heroes that are common to all the people – others, such as the warring factions of the Mạc, Trịnh and Nguyễn families, are not held up as heroes but are, rather, the gang who let the people down. However, although Hồ Chí Minh holds the great kings up as heroes whose deeds and achievements deserve great praise, he is scathing in his assessment of the latter day monarchy (the Nguyễn) and holds out no hope for any future government of that kind. The Nguyễn seem to have finished off respect for the monarchy forever in Hồ Chí Minh's view. Pages 9 and 10 of the text point out how, although the Nguyễn line of kings has committed crimes which are “full and deep”, the people and their heroes are “loyal subjects” and have “loyal hearts”. It is not obvious to where this loyalty is directed, but I would suggest to a new national identity “Việt Nam” introduced on page 11 of the text.

The importance of unity is paramount. The times of restoration of the land are those when the people were united behind a popular leader. The times of disunity invited uprisings and invasion by the enemy. Page 12 of the text concludes the work by proclaiming an organisation, the Việt Minh, as the new leader of Vietnam and, like the great leaders of old, people such as Trần Hưng Đạo, the other great men and women of the Trần dynasty and the Hai Bà Trưng, it will lead a united people towards a new independent state of Việt Nam.

⁵² The story of the child of Phù Đổng is well known to Vietnamese people. He was a mythical character from the time of the Hùng kings who, when called upon to help, grew into a giant and defeated an invader from the north. After this he ascended to heaven and was granted the title of Phù Đổng Thiên Vương (heavenly king of Phù Đổng). See Hà Văn Thụ and Trần Hồng Đức *A Brief Chronology*, pp. 5, 6.

A “Mission Statement”: *Việt Minh ngũ tự kinh*

A small booklet from 1942⁵³ describes the reasons behind the formation of the Việt Minh, and the way in which the Association is organised, what it takes to be a member, formation of cells, need for secrecy, and so forth. The name of the booklet is *Việt Minh Ngũ tự kinh* (“Việt Minh five-character book” or “Việt Minh book of pentameters”),⁵⁴ which title is possibly related to the name of a well-known booklet used to teach Chinese, and particularly Confucian, culture *Tam Tự Kinh* (“Three-character Book”).⁵⁵ Each line in the *Việt Minh* book is five characters long and each of the ten verses has twelve lines, making 600 syllables (or Hán-Nôm characters) in total (excluding the opening four-line introduction). The first line of each verse rhymes with the last line of the previous verse, and the rest of the lines are rhyming couplets. The printed copies of the booklet were reproduced from a hand-written stencil and the whole is finished off with a hand-drawn five-pointed star. There is no direct evidence but staff at the Museum of the Revolution have told me that they assume that it was initially written by Hồ Chí Minh,⁵⁶ however it is not included in the 1983 edition of the collected works of Hồ Chí Minh. Alexander Woodside notes that the *Việt Minh Ngũ tự kinh* was used as a text for teaching reading. Of the 1942-1943 period, he writes:

Everywhere that Viet Minh organizations appeared, noontime or evening reading classes were held for illiterate adult peasants, as well as daytime classes for children. The text used in these literacy classes was a new “Five Character Classic” especially written for them by Ho Chi Minh. Like classical primers, it was an instrument of indoctrination.⁵⁷

The transmission of ideas and ideology fostered by this little booklet is further discussed below. A transcription and translation of the booklet appears as Appendix E.

⁵³ The copy of the booklet that I have has been photographed from that in the Museum of the Revolution in Hanoi and is dated 1944, but it was advertised as being for sale two years prior to this. See Phạm Mai Hùng (ed.) *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)*, p. 63.

⁵⁴ *Việt Minh Ngũ Tự Kinh*. Cao Bằng: V.M. Tuyên Truyền Bộ, 1944. Possibly available for viewing at the Museum of the Revolution, Hanoi.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Đoàn Trung Còn. *Tam tự kinh*. Biên Hòa: NXB Đồng Nai, 1999. A version with English language is also available, see Zhang Lizhong and Wang Zhongshu. *Three-Character-Chinese Poem*, 2nd edition. (Originally published: 1992, Bilingual Press, Bendigo, Victoria, Australia). Beijing: Morning Glory Publishers, 1998.

⁵⁶ Personal interview with Ngô Thị Ba, Museum of the Revolution, Hanoi, September 2002.

⁵⁷ Alexander B. Woodside. *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976, p. 221.

The booklet on which the title is modelled, the *Tam tự kinh* has 380 lines of 3 characters, a total of 1140 characters. It was written during the Song (Tống) Dynasty in China (960-1279), a time when “the availability of cheaper and a vastly increased number of reading materials was a boon to education and brought about a significant increase in literacy”.⁵⁸ It was probably written by, or by members of the school of, Lu Hsiang-shan (more contemporary spelling Lu Xiangshan, 1139-1193). During the Song dynasty there was a Neo-Confucian revival,⁵⁹ and at least one copy of the *Tam tự kinh* currently available in Vietnam has a picture of *Khổng Phu Tử* (Confucius) on the back cover.⁶⁰ Two main schools of thought developed during this twelfth Century Neo-Confucian revival:

...a definite cleavage developed between the two wings of Neo-Confucian thought, the school of Principle or Reason and the school of the Mind or Intuition.⁶¹

The writings of this latter school seem to have informed the *Tam tự kinh*, possibly those of Lu Hsiang-shan in particular. The *Tam tự kinh* (in Vietnamese translation) begins:

Người ta lúc ban đầu, thì cái tánh vốn lành.

Our people from the beginning are basically of good character.⁶²

And goes on to affirm other worthy characteristics of people in general and to praise the worth of education. This is a similar thought to that which is contained in the writings of Lu Hsiang-shan:

The human mind is most intelligent and principle is most clear. All people have this in mind and all minds contain this principle in full.⁶³

and his principles have been summed up as:

...recalling Mencius' doctrine of the nature's innate goodness⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Charles A. Peterson. “Printing and the successful application of technology” in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of China*, pp. 187-188, edited by Brian Hook and Denis Twitchett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 188.

⁵⁹ Ian McMorran. “Confucianism” in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of China*, pp. 301-304, edited by Brian Hook and Denis Twitchett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 304.

⁶⁰ See Đoàn Trung Còn, *Tam tự kinh*, back cover.

⁶¹ Wm. Theodore de Bary, Wing-tsit Chan and Burton Watson, eds. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 1 of 2. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1960, p. 509.

⁶² Đoàn Trung Còn, *Tam tự kinh*, p. 7.

⁶³ Wm. Theodore de Bary (et al), *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, p. 510.

⁶⁴ Ian McMorran, “Confucianism”, p.304.

Why should the Việt Minh, an organisation founded on the ideals of independence and nationalism and by people with Marxist leanings, refer to a Confucian text for the title of one of their booklets of principles? In Vietnamese the title would be something like *Sách năm chữ của Việt Minh* but instead it is given a Sino-Vietnamese title *Việt Minh Ngũ tự kinh*, recalling the Confucian title *Tam tự kinh*.⁶⁵ I think that one answer to this can be found in the prestige that Confucianism enjoyed in the Vietnamese countryside, and a certain similarity between Confucian and Marxist thought, at least in the perceptions of some Vietnamese. Nguyễn Khắc Viện writes:

Marxism was not baffling to Confucians in that it concentrated man's thoughts on political and social problems. By defining man as the total of his social relationships, Marxism hardly came as a shock to the Confucian scholar who had always considered the highest aim of man to be the fulfilment of his social obligations.⁶⁶

Further, local village scholars were often the first leaders of independence movements:

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Vietnam faced colonial aggression. The split between mandarins and [village] scholars widened. The monarchy and mandarins hurried to make a pact with the enemy because the throne and mandarins' ranks were more important to them than national independence. Yet, despite the court's appeals to "remain calm," scholars in the villages, confident of support from the people, and heir to many centuries of national struggle, proceeded to mobilize the peasants and organize the resistance. Scholars from North and South became warriors⁶⁷

It seems that at least some of the leadership of the Việt Minh saw that organisation as something of the custodians of the Confucian ideal, at least as it was expressed by village scholars of the late nineteenth Century. David Marr points out that there was a number of texts produced in the 1920s and 1930s that "attempt[ed] to return directly to the Neo-Confucian classics" by republishing them, or commentaries on them, in the *quốc ngữ* script rather than the original *nôm* or Chinese scripts.⁶⁸ Many of these texts reflected on matters

⁶⁵ *tam* is Sino-Vietnamese for "three", and *ngũ* is Sino-Vietnamese for "five".

⁶⁶ Nguyen Khac Vien (1962). "Confucianism and Marxism in Vietnam", translated by Linda Yarr, Jayne Werner and Tran Tuong Nhu in *Tradition and Revolution in Vietnam*, pp. 15-52, edited by David Marr and Jayne Werner. (Originally published: *La Pensée*, No. 105, October 1962). Berkeley: Indochina Resource Center, 1974, p. 47.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 41.

⁶⁸ Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, p. 89. See also pp. 88-93 for wider discussion on "Traditionalist Reformulations" of Confucian ideals in this period.

related to human relationships in the Neo-Confucian context, so the idea of going back to traditional sources was not particular to the *Việt Minh*.

Although the title of the *Việt Minh Ngũ tự kinh* shares something of a Confucian heritage with *Tam tự kinh*, that is not quite the end of similarities between the two publications. The *Tam tự kinh* is concerned with social organisation, an individual's place in society, the value of education and the correct way to raise children. The *Việt Minh Ngũ tự kinh* mainly covers the political situation in Vietnam, yet it does express the aspirations of what life could be like in an independent Vietnam and is concerned with aspect of morality and ethics. It was, as mentioned above, used for educational purposes.

Verses one and two of the *Ngũ tự kinh* are concerned with the colonial situation in Vietnam and succinctly sum up the reasons why the French and Japanese troops are there, according to the *Việt Minh* account. That is, the French are cruel robbers and oppressors, whereas the Japanese are simply thieves. "They make of us fools" and push opium and alcohol on to the people destroying Vietnamese society. The third verse of the *Ngũ tự kinh* uses much of the same language as the *Lịch sử Nước ta* discussed earlier in this chapter, referring to *anh hùng dân tộc* (people's heroes), and talk of the *non sông tổ quốc* (hills and rivers of the fatherland) coming out to fight the invader. This is visionary material using a powerful symbol of the land – the hills and rivers of Vietnam, a symbol also widely used in the *Lịch sử Nước ta*, but in a more poetic vein there, and in Vietnamese (*giang-san*) rather than the Sino-*Việt* of this publication.

Verse four describes the guerilla tactics that will be employed to defeat the enemy, the destruction of the infrastructure of roads and telecommunications that will leave the enemy with no "ears" or "legs". It foreshadows the scorched earth tactics of keeping food from the enemy and the surprise attacks on the enemy military. Verses five and six describe the "new utopia" of an independent Vietnam. The new Vietnam will be much more egalitarian, the people will elect the Government, significantly the ethnic minorities – the *Thổ*, the *Mường*, the *Mán* and the *Nùng* will have the same rights as the majority *Kinh*. In the way that the verse is written, the *Kinh* are simply another ethnic group, with no special advantages over other groups, and mutual love and respect will be their guide.

There will be equal rights for women, fair pay for all, taxes (unspecified) will be abolished and farmers will own land and cattle.

Verse seven discusses the way to increase the membership of the Việt Minh and the other affiliated *cứu quốc* (save the country) organisations. This is to be done by a mixture of propaganda and private networking, but people would be admitted only after “thorough investigation”, presumably to try to prevent *Việt gian* (spies) from entering. In later years, the *Việt gian* were to prove to be a big problem and some of the later propaganda was prepared to address the recruitment by the French colonisers of Vietnamese for spying and as members of the army. Recruitment to the Việt Minh is to be done by, first of all, “making friends (or acquaintances)”, investigating them and, only then, speaking openly with them about the need to fight the French and Japanese and retaking the country.

Verses eight and nine describe the Việt Minh organisation and rules. It is a secret, cellular organisation, each cell being made up of three to nine members, with a cell leader in each one. Each cell meets twice a month and monthly dues must be paid, although there is no mention of how much this is. There is an executive committee for each two to three cells. The last line of verse eight, in common with the thought behind *Lịch sử Nước ta*, declares that “The urgent business is unity”, and this is reinforced by a declaration that majority decisions must be followed by everyone and that “All the work of the association must be done [completed]”. People who join must take the organisation seriously and give up some of their time and money.⁶⁹

Verse nine sets out what is expected of *người cách mệnh* (revolutionaries), that is, members of the “inner circle”, probably members of the Indochinese Communist Party. True revolutionaries:

- are called upon to sacrifice;
- must be faithful, resolute and united;
- must help and love their comrades as brother and sister;

⁶⁹ During the early part of the twentieth Century, much of the Vietnamese peasantry had become “monetised” due to the taxation requirements of the French Colonial Government. See the comments in Chapter 2 concerning this issue.

- withstand criticism, and happily welcome others, even their critics.

The call for the revolutionary man to have particular virtues recalls the five cardinal virtues outlined in the *Tam tị kinh*:

- humaneness, mercy or charity (*nhân*);
- righteousness (*ngĩa*);
- propriety, correct behaviour (*lễ*);
- intellect, knowledge (*trí*);
- sincerity, trust (*tín*).⁷⁰

There is more than this in the *Tam tị kinh* about the ideal person, but this will suffice for now. Both booklets have a vision of the possibility of the development of an ideal person, although the visions are not quite congruent. The *Việt Minh* booklet does not use the archaic language of the *Tam tị kinh* and expresses itself in more functional terms, describing what the ideal revolutionary must do, rather than prescribing what qualities must be possessed. If the revolutionary man can be found, then the power of the association will be “extraordinary”. The description of the true revolutionary is similar to that used by Hồ Chí Minh in an earlier work of his. In the frontispiece of his publication *Đường Cách Mạng* (“The Road to Revolution”),⁷¹ produced between 1925 and 1927, he described the ideal revolutionary man:

Tư cách một người Cách mệnh
Tự mình phải:
Cần kiệm.
Hoà mà không tư.
Cả quyết sửa lỗi mình.
Cẩn thận mà không nhút nhát.
Hay hỏi.
Nhẫn nại (chịu khó)
Hay nghiên cứu, xem xét.
Vị công vong tư.
Không hiếu danh, không kiêu ngạo.
Nói thì phải làm.
Giữ chủ nghĩa cho vững.

Characteristics of a Revolutionary
In himself he must be:
Industrious and thrifty.
Friendly and not selfish.
Determined to correct all mistakes.
Careful but not timid.
Always questioning.
Patient.
Constantly researching and seeking.
For the public, not for oneself.
Not vain, nor arrogant.
Acts on his word.
Holds beliefs faithfully.

⁷⁰ Đoàn Trung Còn, *Tam tị kinh*, pp. 22,24.

⁷¹ See Hồ Chí Minh. *Đường Kách mệnh [Đường Cách mạng]*. (Originally published: 1927). Hải Hưng: Ủy ban Kiểm tra Trung ương, 1975, p. ii. Note that in the original publication, Hồ Chí Minh uses a spelling which is unusual by modern Vietnamese standards, where the title would be *Đường Cách Mạng*.

<i>Tư cách một người Cách mệnh</i>	Characteristics of a Revolutionary
<i>Hy sinh.</i>	Sacrifices.
<i>Ít lòng tham muốn về vật chất.</i>	Little desirous of material things.
<i>Bí mật.</i>	Keeps secrets.
<i>Đối người phải:</i>	Dealing with other people:
<i>Với từng người thì khoan thứ.</i>	Be forgiving, understanding.
<i>Với đoàn thể thì nghiêm.</i>	Follow strictly the organisation. ⁷²
<i>Có lòng bày vẽ cho người.</i>	Be generous to others.
<i>Trực mà không táo bạo.</i>	Just but not bold.
<i>Hay xem xét người.</i>	Always enquire about people.
<i>Làm việc phải:</i>	Their work must be:
<i>Xem xét hoàn cảnh kỹ càng.</i>	Investigate circumstances carefully.
<i>Quyết đoán.</i>	Be resolved.
<i>Dũng cảm.</i>	Brave.
<i>Phục tùng đoàn thể.</i>	Comply with the organisation's rules.

David Marr notes that, of these “The only maxim that might have been out of place in a Confucian primer or a boy scout manual was ‘Know how to keep secrets’”.⁷³ Peter De Caro points to the Neo-Confucian elements of Hồ Chí Minh’s rhetoric and asserts that he wished to portray himself as a “sage man” or Chun Tzu.⁷⁴ However, a careful analysis of the original sources shows that, while Hồ Chí Minh used Neo-Confucian elements in his writing – presumably to appeal to his intended audience – he was more concerned with using these factors to stir nationalist sentiment than in making an argument for establishment of a Neo-Confucian polity. He was obviously imbued with deep Neo-Confucian personal values, as DeCaro has shown, and these were with him from his childhood, as William Duiker has shown.⁷⁵ In any case, Hồ Chí Minh’s personal characteristics, by all accounts, seem to have transcended any narrow ideological description.⁷⁶

⁷² The organisation referred to here is the *Hội Việt Nam Cách Mệnh Thanh Niên*, the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League, formed by Hồ Chí Minh in early June 1925. See William J. Duiker. *Ho Chi Minh*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2000, p. 121.

⁷³ Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, p. 375.

⁷⁴ Peter A. DeCaro. *Rhetoric of Revolt: Ho Chi Minh's Discourse for Revolution*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003, pp. 51-85. DeCaro obviously has a great deal of respect for Hồ Chí Minh, but he neither reads nor speaks Vietnamese and makes his claims based on some translated sources – see DeCaro, *Rhetoric of Revolt*, p. 113.

⁷⁵ See Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh*, pp. 17-24.

⁷⁶ See DeCaro, *Rhetoric of Revolt*, pp. 69-75.

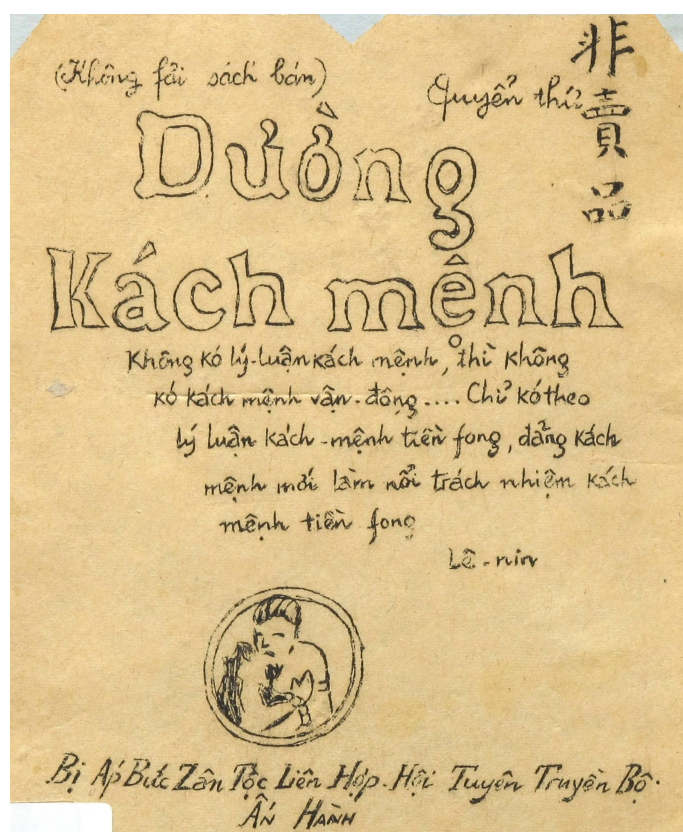


Illustration 4-5: Original Front Page of Đường Cách Mạng

The front page of one of the original copies of *Đường Cách Mạng* is shown at Illustration 4-5.⁷⁷ The handwriting and the drawing are those of Hồ Chí Minh and can be compared with the copy of *Lịch sử Nước Ta* shown in Appendix B and discussed above. The *Đường Cách Mạng* was written in the mid-1920s when Hồ Chí Minh was in his mid-30s and the orthography of the Vietnamese language was still developing – Hồ Chí Minh uses “D” instead of “Đ”, “f” instead of “ph”, “k” where modern orthography would use “c” and the use of “Z”. It was only later, during the Việt Minh literacy campaign, that modern orthography became more widely-known and standardised.

According to the *Ngũ tự kinh* the Việt Minh organisation is not for everyone to join as a formal member, it has an element of exclusivity about it, and yet it is working for all, as it’s vision for the new independent Vietnam as portrayed in verses five and six shows.

⁷⁷ The copy from which the picture was taken was a transcription made by the Central Inspectorate Committee in Hải Hưng in Nam Định province, where an original copy was found in the archives in 1975. When the transcription was made, the original front cover was attached.

Nevertheless, this organisation is seen as a leader in the struggle for independence and support is requested from everyone.

Summary

David Marr sums up Hồ Chí Minh's approach to propaganda:

...Ho Chi Minh set the tone of Viet Minh propaganda by giving Vietnamese resistance to foreign aggression a timeless quality above and beyond the historical dialectic. Traditional culture, particularly as represented in folksongs and folk poetry, was said to represent a unique and essentially good Vietnamese national character. Contemporary politics was reinterpreted in terms of the vast majority who would surely uphold the just cause versus the handful of traitors who would stick with the foreign bandits.⁷⁸

This Chapter has shown two fine examples of subtle propaganda, both attributed to Hồ Chí Minh and both based on Vietnamese traditions of folk poetry, a Vietnamese national character and traditional culture, particularly as expressed in Neo-Confucian ideals. Both use symbols that are meaningful to the target audience, manipulating the poetry and the imagery towards the development of a new and independent Vietnam. Both hint at the way that this must be achieved, by sacrifice and by the involvement of ordinary people, the whole population united, in a struggle against the coloniser and the coloniser's supporters. The examples shown here are largely text-based and directed towards a more-or-less literate demographic. The next chapter will consider material that is directed more visually, but which still uses some of the same symbols that have been met here.

⁷⁸ Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, p. 402.

Chapter 5

Flowering of Vietnamese Culture in the *Việt bắc*

Important to gaining an appreciation of the effect and production of mobilisation materials in the 1940s and 1950s is an understanding of the cultural climate at the time. Previous chapters have studied the mobilisation materials developed, largely by Hồ Chí Minh, for the rural areas of the *Việt bắc* and this chapter looks at some wider issues involving the general intellectual outlook in Vietnam at the same time. The leadership of the Việt Minh lived in an intellectual environment influenced by international thought and events, particularly from China and Russia. Some of the leaders of the Việt Minh – those who were also leaders of the Indochinese Communist Party – had received some training in Russia¹ but, beyond a heavy use of specialist vocabulary from Marxist-Leninist theory, most of the visual and written material which I have studied does not show a large influence from Russian artistic or written sources. However, there are some similarities between the propaganda materials produced in China during the late 1930s and the Vietnamese materials of the Revolutionary and Resistance periods. Later Chinese propaganda, produced after the Communist victory in 1949, is different to both of these, in form and content.

In this chapter, the Chinese situation is discussed, as far as it is relevant to Vietnam, and then the situation of Vietnamese artists and writers is considered. After the generally creative and liberal period from the mid 1920s to the late 1930s, fuelled by the re-emergence of the *quốc ngữ* writing system, and the influx of ideas from Europe, idealistic writers and artists warmed to the nationalist and independence movement, joined the Việt Minh and began putting their talents to use persuading others to do the same.

¹ Hồ Chí Minh himself had attended the “Stalin School” (The Communist University of the Toilers of the East) in Moscow in 1924 (see William J. Duiker, *Hồ Chí Minh*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2000, pp. 92-94), and from mid-1925 “more than one hundred Vietnamese” went to Moscow and Leningrad for training (Duiker, *Hồ Chí Minh*, p. 101). Duiker also reports a large group (144 people) of Vietnamese studying in Moscow in 1934 (Duiker, *Hồ Chí Minh*, p. 212).

Times of Conflict for Arts and Letters – China Under Japan

In times of national distress, it is not uncommon for people, including artists and writers, to turn their talents and attention, insofar as they are able, to a quest for national salvation. In the 1930s, the well known and respected Chinese cartoonist, Feng Zikai (1898-1975), was immersed in Buddhist reflection and drawing romantic images of Chinese urban family life (his children and cats are particularly whimsical). His cartoon “War and Flower”² shown in Illustration 5-1 (below), as well as being an example of his remarkable talent for expressiveness with a few simple lines, is typical of his belief in the resilience of life (“wherever life has not died out, it staggers to its feet again”),³ and illustrates his respect for the sanctity of life, even in the midst of warfare.



Fig. 42. Feng Zikai, “War and Flower.” From Feng, *Manhua de miaofa* (Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1948), p. 21.

Illustration 5-1. An example – one of Feng Zikai’s
Cartoons.

Generally the works of this Japanese-trained artist were contemplative, and his life concerned with drawing, debate, writing and family matters. However, in 1937, Japan invaded China, Feng lost his home, became a refugee and, through necessity, became an

² Illustration copied from p. 149 of Chang-Tai Hung. *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1994. The date on this cartoon is uncertain, but Feng Zikai refers to it in his 1948 publication *Manhua de miaofa*, so it must have been produced prior to that. See Hung, *War and Popular Culture*, pp. 150, 328 (note 141) and 378 (Bibliography). Copies of Feng Zikai’s cartoons are readily available on the Internet, search engines return many links to useful sites.

³ Buddhism has no monopoly on such sentiments, of course, and the quote is actually a line from the German writer Berthold Brecht (John Willett, translator), in *Mutter Courages Lied*, the theme song from the play *Mutter Courage* (set to music by Paul Dessau). Hear Robyn Archer and The London Sinfonietta conducted by Dominic Muldowney. *Robyn Archer Sings Brecht: EMI, 1981. CD. CDC 7 47576 2*, track 25.

artist dedicated to the Resistance against the Japanese, believing that “art could and should play a major role in saving China”. He then argued that “some things were more important than life itself, ‘not to become a conquered people’ being one of them”.⁴ Feng Zikai maintained his pacifist attitude while doing his war work, as some of his resistance cartoons show, but he lent his authority and talent to awaking his fellow countrymen to the cause of resistance against the Japanese invader. A similar change took place a decade later in many Vietnamese writers and artists under persuasion from the Việt Minh leadership.

A thread in the Vietnamese story can be picked up from about 1929 in China. In that year Mao Zedong encouraged and helped in the establishment of a Soviet in Jiangxi – although usually referred to as a single “Soviet”, there were actually five soviets in the province by 1930, controlled by the Mao faction of the Communist Party and governing probably about 9 million people.⁵ A similar project in Vietnam’s Nghệ-Tĩnh provinces was discussed in Chapter 2.

During a conference held at Ruijin in Jiangxi in 1931 to discuss tactics of mass mobilisation, there was a clash between those committed to a military view, and those who favoured a more political approach to winning support.⁶ Mao Zedong was an advocate of the political approach, and was concerned with developing a theoretical base for the place of art and literature in a Communist or Socialist society. Mao’s advocacy won the day, and control of propaganda moved from the army to the political wing of the CCP.⁷ Later, Mao’s ideas on the place of art and literature had a direct influence on the

⁴ See Hung, *War and Popular Culture*, pp. 135-150 for an account of Feng Zikai’s work. Quotes here are taken directly from that publication. Geremie Barmé has written a biography of Feng Zikai’s life, see Geremie R. Barmé. *An Artistic Exile: A Life of Feng Zikai (1898-1975)*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2002.

⁵ R. T. Phillips. “Jianxi Soviet”, in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of China*, pp. 243-244, edited by Brian Hook and Denis Twitchett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 244. Other writers prefer to see the Jiangxi Soviet period as starting a little later – Hung refers to it as 1931-1934 – see Hung, *War and Popular Culture*, p. 222. For the split between Mao Zedong and the rest of the Communist Party see Immanuel C. Y. Hsü. *The Rise of Modern China*. New York, London and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1970, pp. 649-650, 653-655.

⁶ The dispute was a power struggle as well as a contestation of ideas. See Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, pp. 654-655. Hsü uses the Wade-Giles spelling “Juichin” for Ruijin.

⁷ See Stefan Landsberger. *Chinese Propaganda Posters – From Revolution to Modernization*. Amsterdam and Singapore: The Pepin Press BV, 2001, p. 34.

way in which these activities were viewed by the Việt Minh in Vietnam and a discussion of this point occurs later in this Chapter.

The soviets governed in the countryside in Jiangxi until the defeat of the Communist forces by the Nationalist army (at their fifth attempt) in the latter half of 1934. The defeated army established a base in Shaanxi province at Yan'an at the end of an historic "Long March" of about 9,600Km during which many died, only about 8,000 soldiers surviving out of 85,000 who began the trek⁸. Mao himself saw the Long March as a propaganda tool and a "seeding machine":

The Long March is also a propaganda team. It has announced to some 200 million people in eleven provinces that the road of the Red Army is their only road to liberation...

The Long March is as well a seeding-machine. In eleven provinces it has sown many seeds that will sprout, leaf, blossom, and bear fruit, and will yield a harvest.⁹

In spite of the large death toll, the Long March demonstrated the Communist Party as a force with real skills, dedication and commitment to leadership, a leadership which extended to the arts and it, together with the lack of success in attempted urban uprisings, saw the emergence of Mao Zedong as senior leader of the Communist movement in China. For some Vietnamese leaders the Long March was also to become a potent symbol, and the August Revolution of 1945 was to become the Vietnamese "seeding machine".

In July 1937, the Japanese invaded China, remaining there until the end of the Second World War. During the Japanese occupation, China was effectively divided into three regions – the Japanese-occupied territories in the coastal areas, the areas controlled by the Nationalists in the southern inland areas, and the Communist controlled regions in

⁸ In fact, the base at Yan'an was established at the end of 1936, the first base being at Baoan. See R. T. Phillips. "Yan'an", in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of China*, p. 249, edited by Brian Hook and Denis Twitchett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 249. For more information on the "Long March" see R. T. Phillips. "The Long March", in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of China*, pp. 244-245, edited by Brian Hook and Denis Twitchett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 245 and Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, pp. 658-661, the latter containing a map.

⁹ Mao Zedong (1935). "On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism (December 27, 1935)", in *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings 1912-1949*, Vol. V: "Toward the Second United Front, January 1935 - July 1937", pp. 86-102, edited by Stuart R. Schram and Nancy J. Hodes. Armonk, London: M.E. Sharpe, 1999, p. 92.

the inland northern areas. The Japanese presence, to some extent, united the various feuding parties in China:

...the Japanese offensive did not cripple the nation's will to resist. On the contrary, it created an unprecedented wave of patriotism and an uncommon spirit of national unity in the early war years. Nowhere was this more evident than in the dedicated commitment of Chinese intellectuals and artists to the resistance cause and in the second united front between the Nationalists and the Communists.¹⁰

It is these “intellectuals and artists” who become important in the Vietnamese context.

The Jiangxi period had enabled Mao to develop and consolidate his theoretical framework for the Communist movement in China, giving it a somewhat different flavour from international Communism. Chinese Communism was henceforth to have a connection with, and concern for, the aspirations of the peasantry. “Mao favored equal distribution of all grades of land to small landlords, rich peasants, and poor peasants alike...”.¹¹ Mao also advocated the development of mobile guerrilla warfare, as opposed to positional warfare with a large standing army and the readiness to form a united front to defeat the common enemy, Japan. Regarding a united front, Mao shows himself as something of a nationalist, having moved some distance from the views of the old Chinese Politburo and also the international Communist movement.¹² In the Communist controlled areas of China, centred on Yan'an, Mao was able to build on his ideas. The following passage, delivered in a report by Mao to the Sixth Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee in November 1938, as quoted by Hung, is worth reproducing in full, as it shows the development of his thinking in the area of the arts. As discussed later in this chapter, these ideas were taken up and reapplied to the Vietnamese situation by Trường Chinh, Party Secretary of the Indochinese Communist Party:

There is no such thing as abstract Marxism, but only concrete Marxism. What we call concrete Marxism is Marxism that has taken on a national form, that is, Marxism applied to the concrete struggle in the concrete conditions prevailing in China, and not Marxism abstractly used ... Consequently, the Sinification of Marxism – that is to say, making certain that in all of its manifestations it is imbued with Chinese peculiarities, using it according to those peculiarities – becomes a problem that must be

¹⁰ Hung, *War and Popular Culture*, p. 6.

¹¹ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, p. 655.

¹² See *ibid.*, p. 655.

understood by the whole Party without delay ... We must put an end to writing eight-legged essays on foreign models; there must be less repeating of empty and abstract refrains; we must discard our dogmatism and replace it by a new and vital Chinese style and manner, pleasing to the eye and to the ear of the Chinese common people.¹³

The need to be “pleasing to the eye and to the ear of the Chinese common people” meant that artists and writers would have to be educated, encouraged, to write and draw for a different audience, a new, non-urban audience, of country-folk, and ordinary tradespeople. No eight-legged essays for them.¹⁴

In May 1942 an important Conference on Literature and Art was held at Yan’an to try to consolidate the theory of where “the arts” may fit in a Communist society. The results of this conference became known to Vietnamese leaders and were taken up, guiding the later development of Việt Minh ideas on the arts. Because of this profound influence on Vietnamese thinking, it is worth while exploring Mao’s ideas more closely. Mao Zedong gave the opening and closing addresses in what are now the well-known “Yan’an Talks”¹⁵ which, according to Landsberger “were to guide all artistic expression [in China] until the present day [2001]”¹⁶. Mao asked the question “For whom are our art and literature intended?”¹⁷. He then answered “[the] more than 90 per cent of the total population [who] are the workers, peasants, soldiers and the petty bourgeoisie”¹⁸. He asked how artists and writers could serve the people: “Should we [artists and writers] devote ourselves to elevation or to popularisation?”¹⁹ and the answer is: “Only by speaking for

¹³ Hung, *War and Popular Culture*, p. 226. Hung quotes this from Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, 4 vols. (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1967 2:207-210. He has used Stuart Schram’s translation, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, pp. 172-173. See Hung, *War and Popular Culture*, p. 344.

¹⁴ “Eight-legged essay” refers to a particular style of essay, with eight well-defined and circumscribed paragraphs, needed for the Government examinations in China – McMullen dates the examination system from 589 (Sui Dynasty), and the appearance of the eight-legged essay, with all its rigidity, from 1487 (see D. McMullen. “The examination system”, in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of China*, pp. 109-111, edited by Brian Hook and Denis Twitchett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 110-111). Hsü notes that “This essay demonstrated a formal and rigid style of writing, requiring great literary skills but no profound knowledge” (See Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, p. 99). Mao’s reference to eight-legged essays “in the foreign style” is puzzling.

¹⁵ See Mao Tse-tung, *Talks at the Yen’an Forum on Art and Literature*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1956.

¹⁶ Landsberger, *Chinese Propaganda Posters*, p. 35.

¹⁷ Mao Tse-tung, *Talks at Yen’an*, p. 12.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 20.

the masses can he [the artist] educate them and only by becoming their pupil can he become their teacher.”²⁰ He touched on the relationship between art and politics saying “There is no such thing as art for art’s sake ... independent of politics”.²¹ Art and literature, may exert a strong influence on politics but are, nonetheless, subordinate to politics. In Mao’s own words, revolutionary art and literature are the “cogs and screws” of the revolution. In his view art and literary criticism are part of an enduring struggle, in both artistic and political arenas.²² Mao demands a “unity of politics and art, of content and form”, and proceeds with examples from the work at Yan’an. He says that the “aggressors, exploiters and oppressors” must be exposed, but that the people’s shortcomings have to be overcome by “means of criticism and self-criticism within the ranks of the people themselves” but writers and artists need to “carry on such criticism and self-criticism”.²³

Mao concludes by listing the defects that remain: “idealism, doctrinairism, utopianism, empty talk, contempt of practice and aloofness from the masses”.²⁴ He encourages writers and artists to accept the new “epoch of the masses”, and quotes the writer Lu Hsun’s couplet as a motto “With frowning brows I coldly defy the thousands pointing their accusing fingers at me; with bowed head I meekly submit as an ox for the child [that is, ordinary people] to ride on”.²⁵ And so, revolutionary writers and artists should become as “oxen” for carrying the broad masses of the people.

Vietnamese Responses to the “Arts” Question

Mao’s “Yan’an Talks” were not noticed straight away in Vietnam, which in 1942 was firmly under French and Japanese rule, but there were some contemporary echoes in another “Long March”. This was in the person of Đặng Xuân Khu,²⁶ who took the

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 29.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 32.

²² *ibid.*, p. 35.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 41.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 46.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 50. The Lu Hsun quote is noted as being from “In Mockery of Myself”, *Complete Works of Lu Hsun*, Chinese ed., Vol. VII.

²⁶ Đặng Xuân Khu was born on 9th February 1907 in what is now Xuân Hồng village, Nam Định province. See Nguyễn Khoa Điềm, Hồng Vinh, Lê Hữu Nghĩa, Trần Tình, Trần Đình Nghiêm and Đặng Hữu Hải. “Tiểu sử tóm tắt của đồng chí Trường Chinh, cố vấn chấp hành trung ương Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam”, in *Trường Chinh: Một nhân cách lớn, một nhà lãnh đạo kiệt xuất của cách mạng* ...continued on page 130

Revolutionary name Trường Chinh, a Sino-Vietnamese name which carries the meaning “Long March”. Trường Chinh was one of the key people in the Việt Minh leadership, being Party Secretary, and de-facto head of the Party, from 1940 to 1956, and someone who had a profound effect on the course of the arts and literature in Vietnam during the 1940s and beyond. This was also reflected in his fundamental influence on the development of mobilisation materials during the time of the Resistance against the French. Trường Chinh was obviously very much aware of, and influenced by, ideas that were current in China and in particular, I would argue, influenced by Mao’s ideas on the place of the arts in a Revolutionary society.

Artistic endeavour is useful to the mobilisation and propaganda work of the resistance forces – the Việt Minh – but beyond this, some of the resistance leaders such as Trường Chinh together with Tố Hữu and Hồ Chí Minh were themselves involved as writers. Because the literary achievements of some Party leaders were respected by other writers and intellectuals, their political ideas also achieved credibility in those circles and many intellectuals were thus persuaded to lend their talents to the Resistance.²⁷ Trường Chinh, in particular, wrote poetry throughout his life under the pen name Sóng Hồng (meaning “Red Wave”), and Hồ Chí Minh himself wrote extensive amounts of poetry for the newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* as discussed extensively in Chapter 3.²⁸ One of Trường Chinh’s most important poetic contributions *Là thi sĩ* is discussed later in this Chapter. In the context of the Resistance, Vietnamese intellectuals play an important – almost pivotal – role.

In the debate about ideas and the state of humankind, the State may demand that intellectual discussion be circumscribed by boundaries, and this has been seen to be particularly so in socialist States, but intellectual activity is then able to push against these boundaries, even forcing change, and thereby intellectuals can become quite influential.²⁹

Việt Nam (Hồi ký), pp. 7-12, edited by Nguyễn Khoa Điềm, Hồng Vinh, Lê Hữu Nghĩa, Trần Tình, Trần Đình Nghiêm and Đặng Hữu Hải. Hanoi: NXB Chính Trị Quốc Gia, 2002, p. 7.

²⁷ See Kim N. B. Ninh. *A World Transformed: The Politics of Culture in Revolutionary Vietnam, 1945-1965*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002, p. 37.

²⁸ See also the discussion in Chapter 4 and also Hồ Chí Minh. *Prison Diary*. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1972.

²⁹ See Ninh, *A World Transformed*, p. 10 for further discussion on this point.

Precisely because intellectuals are seen as something of outsiders, as “gadflies”, in an environment where the State is trying to exert authority over them then they may ultimately have more influence than in another political context where they may be simply ignored.

In 1943 Trường Chinh wrote *Đề cương về Văn hóa Việt-Nam* (*Theses on Vietnamese Culture*)³⁰ – and in April of that year the *Hội Văn hóa Cứu quốc Việt Nam* (National Salvation Cultural Association) was formed as part of the Việt Minh.³¹ Trường Chinh was one of the most influential thinkers of modern Vietnam, and these publications had a profound influence – for better or for worse – on Vietnamese culture, particularly in the north, until the present day. The *Theses* was an important document, setting the environment for some profound changes in Vietnamese cultural life which began to be very visible in the late 1950s. English-language translations of the document are not generally available, and so my own translation has been included in this thesis as Appendix G.

The *Theses on Vietnamese Culture* presented a stark choice for Vietnamese culture: either it would become more backward under fascism, or it would break free and catch up with the rest of the world after national liberation. Three principles which should be present in a national cultural movement were listed:

- a) Vietnamisation³² [*dân tộc hóa*] (against all enslaving and colonial influences, leading to the development of an independent Vietnamese culture).
- b) Popularisation [*dại chúng hóa*] (against all policies and actions for culture which oppose the great number of the masses, or are far from the great number of the masses).

³⁰ See *Tiên Phong số 1* for 10-11-1945, page 18, reproduced in facsimile form in the complete *Tiên Phong* collection, Lại Nguyên Ân, Ngô Văn Phú and Nguyễn Kiên, eds. *Sưu tập trọn bộ Tiên Phong (1945-1946)* (*Tập một*), Vol. 1 of 2. Hanoi: NXB Hội Nhà văn, 1996, p. 32. *Theses of Vietnamese Culture* is also published in *Văn Kiện Đảng 1930-1945 (Lưu Hành Nội Bộ) Tập 3*, 1977, pp. 363-369.

³¹ *Sưu tập trọn bộ Tiên Phong* 1996, page 5.

³² Ninh initially defines this phrase as carrying the meaning of “Vietnamisation”, but later settles on “nationalisation”. Neither is entirely satisfactory because *dân tộc* retains multiple meanings. “Nationalisation” is perhaps a better word in a discussion of the international environment. See the following discussion, and also Ninh, *A World Transformed*, p. 29.

c) Scientism [*khoa học hóa*] (against all things which work for a culture contrary to science, which are anti-progressive).³³

The second of these principles is probably the most important and controversial point that Mao made in his Yan'an Talks and, although it seems impossible to know if Trường Chinh was aware of Mao Zedong's "Talks" at the time he wrote the *Theses*,³⁴ this point about literature and arts being centred on, and from the people, became one of the great debating points during the 1940s and beyond. It proved to be one of the hardest points for arts practitioners to accept. The Vietnamese *hóa*, when added to a noun, "carries the sense of an act being done to achieve such a concept"³⁵ – it is much more than the concept itself. So that the phrase *dân tộc hóa* means more than patriotism, it implies Vietnamisation or "national identification", and "an active return to what is uniquely Vietnamese ... it asks for Vietnamization"³⁶. This characteristic appears repeatedly in the material which was discussed in Chapter 4 and occurs again in the material studied in Chapter 6.

When the Việt Minh came to power in Vietnam after the declaration of independence on 2 September 1945 there was a burgeoning of publication activity in most of the larger cities, including the capital Hanoi and nearby cities such as Hải Phòng and further afield in Vinh (Nghệ An province).³⁷ Many of these publications were newspapers or periodicals and many contained cartoons and drawings which portrayed particular political points of view, or offered commentary on contemporary events and ideas. It appears that these publications afforded people, who were later to become the producers of the Việt Minh mobilisation materials studied here, a chance to try techniques of production and printing and to refine the question of audience. The problem of defining

³³ *Văn Kiện Đảng 1930-1945 (Lưu Hành Nội Bộ) Tập 3* 1977, pp. 366-367. The translations are my own, but some of the Vietnamese phrases have been shown (in square brackets) to facilitate the following discussion.

³⁴ Contacts between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) were not unknown in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Duiker recounts how Võ Nguyên Giáp and Phạm Văn Đồng started on their way to study at Yan'an in 1940, although they were recalled before arriving there. See Duiker. *Ho Chi Minh*, p. 241.

³⁵ Ninh, *A World Transformed*, p. 29.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 29.

³⁷ I am indebted to David Marr for providing me with access to his data collected at the National Library of Vietnam in 2004 for this information.

and addressing the audience was critical to the success of the Việt Minh, as Shawn McHale, in discussing *inter alia* the document *Kinh nghiệm Việt Minh ở Việt Bắc*,³⁸ points out: “In short, there was a realization that without understanding the audience, the revolution was doomed”.³⁹ Thus the 1945-1946 publications from the cities were instrumental in developing principles used in the mobilisation material employed in the rural areas.

Discussions in literary circles about Trường Chinh’s *Theses* began almost as soon as it was written,⁴⁰ but the period between the August Revolution in August 1945 and the Việt Minh call for a general uprising against the French on 19 December 1946 saw an intensification of debate on cultural matters. The *Hội Văn Hóa Cứu Quốc* (National Salvation Cultural Association) was at the forefront of the debates as it grappled with the problem of the place of art in the context of building a socialist nation. The Association held a conference on 11 June 1945 to plan the activities that the needed to be addressed. One of the decisions of the conference was to publish secretly a regular magazine to be called *Tiền tuyến* (Front Lines). Apparently issue number 1 was so published, but the name was then changed to *Tiên phong* (“Vanguard”), as “the mouthpiece of the new cultural movement”, the first issue being published openly on 10 November 1945,⁴¹ and taking as its motto the three points in the *Theses* listed above: *Khoa học, Đại chúng, Dân tộc* (“Scientific, Popular, National”).⁴² *Tiên Phong* was published in 24 issues until the Resistance war against the French broke out in Hanoi on 19 December 1946. The last

³⁸ *Kinh nghiệm Việt-minh ở Việt-bắc* (Originally published: 1945). Hà Nội: Tổng Bộ Việt Minh, 1946. See Appendix H for a part translation and Chapter 1 for further discussion.

³⁹ Shawn Frederick McHale. *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004, p. 137.

⁴⁰ See the reminiscences of fourteen writers, extracted from reports at an informal meeting, at the Literature Institute on 15 July 1983 and published in *Một Chặng Đường Văn Hóa: Tập hồi ức và tư liệu về đề cương văn hóa của Đảng và đời sống tư tưởng văn nghệ 1943-1948*. Hanoi: NXB Tác phẩm mới for Hội Nhà Văn Việt Nam, 1985, pp. 33-135. Đặng Thai Mai has some comments about how the *Theses* changed his viewpoint on pp. 83-85.

⁴¹ A complete collection of all issues of *Tiên Phong* was published by Nxb Hội Nhà văn, Hanoi, in two volumes in 1996. Volume 1 has already been cited and Volume 2 is Lại Nguyên Ân, Ngô Văn Phú and Nguyễn Kiên, eds. *Sưu tập trọn bộ Tiên Phong (1945-1946) (Tập hai)*, Vol. 2 of 2. Hanoi: NXB Hội Nhà văn, 1996. Page numbering is continuous across both volumes, Volume 2 beginning at page 547. See pages 7-9 of *Sưu tập trọn bộ Tiên Phong tập một*, for the minutes of the first meeting in June 1945.

⁴² See the front page of each issue. For example, *Sưu tập trọn bộ Tiên Phong tập một*, p. 13 for the front page of issue number 1.

issue is dated 1 December 1946, after which publication was suspended, but the functions and character of *Tiên Phong* were taken over in 1948 by the publication of the magazine *Văn Nghệ* (“Arts and Letters”) in the northern hills of Vietnam (the *Việt bắc*).⁴³

Tiên Phong carried many of the “literature and arts” debates, as well as publishing actual works – stories, poetry, plays and music. Its orientation can be seen by the fact that about two thirds of its output over the year of its publication dealt with issues of criticism and political discussion, the rest being devoted to publication of actual works of literature and music. Table 5-1 shows this situation, the top four rows of the table categorise the actual works reproduced (130 in all), and the remaining nine rows show the breakdown of the critical essays, news items, papers for discussion, and so forth – 262 articles in all dealing with these topics. Table 5-1 was developed from the complete collection of *Tiên Phong*, and from the summary of the types of article that appeared in the magazine over all issues.⁴⁴ Thus, the situation of the arts was an important matter for debate among those who were producing creative works, and some of the threads in this discussion are important to an understanding of the development of propaganda, and are the subject of further discussion.

Topic	Number of Items	Proportion ⁴⁵
Stories and recollections published	79	20%
Poetry published	43	11%
Plays published	4	1%
Music published	4	1%
Discussion papers and newsletters (including such things as the publication of <i>Theses of Culture</i>)	24	6%
Essays about current events in socialist politics (including <i>Cultural News</i>)	97	25%
Essays about culture	60	15%

⁴³ *Sưu tập trọn bộ Tiên Phong tập một*, p. 11.

⁴⁴ See *Sưu tập trọn bộ Tiên Phong tập một* 1996, p. 957-972.

⁴⁵ The percentages do not add up exactly to 100% because of rounding effects.

Topic	Number of Items	Proportion
Essays about literature (many about foreign literature)	47	12%
Essays about fine arts	16	4%
Essays about linguistics	7	2%
Essays about stage performances	5	1%
Essays about music	4	1%
Essays about architecture	2	0.5%
Totals	392	100%

Table 5-1. *Types of Article in Tiên Phong 1945-1946.*

The National Salvation Cultural Association tried to establish the Việt Minh's cultural platform, and one of its first attempts was the production of an elaboration on Trường Chinh's *Theses of Vietnamese Culture*, called *Một nền Văn hóa mới* ("A new Culture") written by Nguyễn Hữu Đang and Nguyễn Đình Thi, published in June 1945.⁴⁶ To produce a new culture, it was first necessary to destroy the old Vietnamese culture, and the new culture is seen as being an urgent requirement, as the old culture is seen as one of the impositions of the invader:

The yoke of invasion is not just restricted to the spheres of economics and politics; the ruling class has a cultural policy entirely devoted to keeping the masses in ignorance, deceiving them, holding them back, and crippling the strong will and ambition of our people. ...

That is why it is not only the reconstruction of national independence but we also need a cultural revolution to be undertaken; just now, we want complete independence, and we must make, in parallel with the political and military mission, an urgent cultural movement.⁴⁷

The petit-bourgeois intellectual, that mainstay of the 1920s and 1930s cultural movements, concerned with modern concepts of individualism and modernity, had a particular dilemma, as the ideals with drove those earlier movements seemed to have

⁴⁶ Nguyễn Hữu Đang and Nguyễn Đình Thi. *Một Nền Văn Hóa Mới*. Hanoi: Hội Văn Hóa Cứu Quốc Việt Nam, 1945. This publication was probably issued after June, as the first meeting of the Association took place on 11 June 1945 (see preceding discussion).

⁴⁷ Đang and Thi, *Một Nền Văn Hóa Mới*, p. 7 (my translation).

little place in two of the three new main concerns of culture – *khoa học hóa* being about modernity.

If, as discussed in Chapter 2, the 1930s was a period of transformation, the changes following the August political Revolution were another revolution. Indicative of the time was the piece entitled *Nhận Đường* (“Recognising the Way”) by the poet Nguyễn Đình Thi. Thi describes the painful process of transformation as a “shedding of the skin”, “newly-grown young skin not yet strengthened, bleeding at the slightest touch”.⁴⁸ In 1947 the painter Tô Ngọc Vân raised arguments about art and propaganda, and the question of who had the right to make definitions. Vân was emphatic in his support for the Revolution, yet was also insistent that propaganda was a temporary phenomenon, whereas art had lasting value, and therein lay the difference. The scholar Đặng Thai Mai reiterated the Marxist view “that an artist was invariably a propagandist for one ideology or another”,⁴⁹ whether stated explicitly or not or whether the artist realised it or not. This view was to win support, but we shall return to this later when the Communist Party took a much harsher line with intellectuals but seemingly without the intellectual underpinning behind Mai’s statement and as more of an authoritarian stance.

In 1947 Trường Chinh contributed further to the debate in a series of articles in the newspaper *Sự Thật*, later published as a booklet called *Kháng chiến nhất định thắng lợi* (“The Resistance Will Win”), and listed the immediate tasks for Vietnam’s cultural workers:

- a – To use art and literature for propaganda and for mobilisation of the forces of the resistance;
- b – To struggle against illiteracy; develop education;
- c – To build a new life;
- d – To popularise the practice of hygiene among the people;
- e – To wipe out all slavish, colonialist remnants in the cultural field;
- f – To develop a culture having a Vietnamese, scientific and popular character.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ninh, *A World Transformed*, p. 69.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

⁵⁰ Trường Chinh (1947). “The Resistance Will Win”, in *Trường Chinh: Selected Writings*, pp. 83-211. (Originally published: as articles in *Sự Thật*, numbers 70 to 81, 4 March to 1 ...continued on page 137

Once again, the three aims of the new literature are advocated, here in Trường Chinh's final point.

The argument, with Tô Ngọc Vân and Đặng Thai Mai acting as spokesmen on opposite sides, continued with Tô Ngọc Vân arguing that specifying the same requirements for both art and propaganda would stunt both. He was particularly bitter about suggestions that artists should get closer to the people. He wrote: "Do people realise that in human society, it is the artists who live closest to the people?". Tô Ngọc Vân was speaking for many intellectuals in taking the stand "that Vietnamese artists were much more involved in the life of the nation than the official characterisation would have it".⁵¹ Trường Chinh produced an interesting side to the discussion in his *Marxism and Vietnamese Culture*, a report delivered at the Second National Cultural Conference in 1948,⁵² by suggesting that: "we can say that there are propagandists who are not or not yet artists, and that there are no artists who are in no way propagandists".⁵³ Chinh could here be said to argue that an artist may never entirely escape their background, and that art will always carry some message related to that background. Chinh's espousal of this respectable intellectual position⁵⁴ is somewhat undermined, as he goes on to prescribe a process of creation in four steps constraining the individual act of creation:

1. Choosing the topic.
2. Determining the audience for one's creation.
3. Acquiring conditions necessary for realisation.
4. Testing works by the reaction of the masses.⁵⁵

But any illusion that we can have "art for art's sake" is dispelled, as art must be tested and finally judged by the masses:

August 1947). Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977, p. 133.

⁵¹ Ninh, *A World Transformed*, pp. 75-76.

⁵² Also published as an article in *Văn Nghệ* No. 6 (October-November 1948). See Ninh, *A World Transformed*, pp. 268, notes 94-98, and also Ninh, *A World Transformed*, p. 78.

⁵³ Trường Chinh (1948). "Marxism and Vietnamese Culture (Report delivered at the Second National Cultural Conference, July 1948)", in *Trường Chinh: Selected Writings*, pp. 213-296. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977, p. 284.

⁵⁴ The notion that we cannot bring a "neutral" background into any creative activity is well established. The idea that some form of "pure" art can exist, almost independently from the artists' experience, has had some powerful arguments against it, and not just from Marxist and Feminist circles.

⁵⁵ Trường Chinh, *Marxism and Vietnamese Culture*, p. 289.

The masses are the most impartial and perspicacious judge of art. If works of art, once created, are devoured, admired, enjoyed, adopted, applied, and chosen by the people as their daily spiritual nourishment, they must have value. On the contrary, those works whose birth is heeded and cared for by no one will die an early death.⁵⁶

The Party response to the on-going debate (apart from arguments engaging specific points) was to organise two conferences – *The 1948 Second National Congress of Culture* from 16-20 July 1948, and *The 1949 Conference of Debate in Việt bắc* from 25-28 September 1949.⁵⁷ As noted above, Trường Chinh's *Marxism and Vietnamese Culture* was the keynote address of the 1948 conference, and it established Hồ Chí Minh, Trường Chinh and the poet Tố Hữu as “the theorists of the Vietnamese revolutionary art and literature”. Kim Ninh notes that the 1948 conference was conducted in an “open intellectual atmosphere”, and she quotes at length from the writer Nguyễn Tuân who described the conference as the “happiest”.⁵⁸ It appears that some of the main results of the 1948 conference were organisational, with the formation of the *Hội Văn hóa Việt Nam* (Vietnamese Cultural Association⁵⁹) replacing the *Hội Văn hóa Cứu quốc Việt Nam* (National Salvation Cultural Association). The responsibilities of the new Association were to:

- 1 – Raise the level of culture among the people;
- 2 – Guide the “new life” (*đời sống*) movement;
- 3 – Help artists and scientists develop their ability for easy creativity;
- 4 – Coordinate the branches in cultural activity and work for the branches to help each other and to share experiences;
- 5 – Unify cultural activities throughout the whole country according to the guidelines and plans already stated;
- 6 – Share cultural materials with all people.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 292.

⁵⁷ The First National Conference on Culture was planned for 24 November 1946 in Hanoi, but was called off because of the deteriorating situation with the French. See *Tiên Phong* number 24, page 7, published in *Sưu tập trọn bộ Tiên Phong tập một* 1996, p. 931.

⁵⁸ Ninh, *A World Transformed*, p. 85.

⁵⁹ See *Văn Kiện Đảng Toàn Tập*. Vol. 9 (1948) of 54. Hà Nội: NXB Chính Trị Quốc Gia, 2001, p. 347. The date of the conference is incorrectly given here as 1947. Ninh translates the name as the “Vietnamese Association for Art and Literature”.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 347-348.

As part of the organisational change, the Association was divided into sections corresponding to the military and administrative areas called Interzones. Artists and writers were urged by Trường Chinh to take part in the fight and to make their contributions as, up to the time of the Congress, “Achievements in the fields of culture and the economy remain pale compared with exploits on the battlefield. In the present war, blood, sweat and ink are not [yet] shed equally”.⁶¹ They joined the new Association enthusiastically, the majority happy to work in their own way for independence for their country, travelling to various Interzone headquarters to contribute in whatever way they could. Ninh particularly describes the artistic activity in Interzones 3 and 4, and says how events there “showed clearly the joy with which intellectuals of different political and artistic backgrounds did converge and exist together”.⁶²

In many ways, the 1949 conference appears to have been much more significant in its effects upon writing and other arts in Vietnam, yet it appears to have been subject to very little analysis.⁶³ Rather than a conference of genuine debate (as the 1948 conference appeared to have been) the *Conference of Debate* appears to have been the occasion for the Party to bring intellectuals under control. Language changes were promoted, for example *nhân dân* (people, nation⁶⁴), with its class connotations, was preferred over the more ethnographically oriented *dân tộc* (nation, race; nationality, ethnic group). Tô Hữu provided definite answers, clearly setting out the class basis of art and literature and giving the leadership to the working class.⁶⁵ There followed a quite extraordinary period of criticism and self-criticism, with writers and artists criticising each other, and their own earlier works. Ninh points out that: “Their works were, therefore, criticised variously for being still, cold, dead, outside of the struggle, far from the people, too peaceful, too beautiful, not real enough, and too real as to be merely photographic accounts of events”.

⁶¹ Trường Chinh, *Marxism and Vietnamese Culture*, p. 293.

⁶² Ninh, *A World Transformed*, p. 88.

⁶³ Ninh claims that it has “not been discussed in detail in Western works on Vietnam of this period”. See Ninh, *A World Transformed*, p. 88.

⁶⁴ Translations from Bùi Phụng. *Từ điển Việt-Anh: Vietnamese English Dictionary*. Hanoi: NXB Thế Giới, 2000, and Đặng Chấn Liêu, Lê Khả Kế and Phạm Duy Trọng. *Từ điển Việt-Anh: Vietnamese-English Dictionary*, 2nd edition. Hồ Chí Minh City: Nxb Hồ Chí Minh City for Viện Ngôn Ngữ Học Trung Tâm Khoa Học Xã Hội và Nhân Văn Quốc Gia, 2001.

⁶⁵ Ninh, *A World Transformed*, pp. 89-90.

She observes (somewhat wryly) that “These rather conflicting voices led to uneven results”.⁶⁶ Mao Zedong’s “Talks at Yan’an” appear to have surfaced somewhat more explicitly at the 1949 conference.

From this time on, there were rectification campaigns to bring theatre, literature, painting and other arts and education into the Party line. The campaigns were effective in bringing about a new intellectual discourse along almost religious lines – Ninh draws parallels with the Roman Catholic doctrine of original sin⁶⁷ – and very destructive in many ways. The painter Tô Ngọc Vân, who, in 1947, so strongly defended the right of an artist to engage in either art or propaganda as he or she saw fit, now wrote “Today due to the light of the Party which has been brought to me by the revolutionary community, shining into my soul, I see clearly that although the Revolution and Resistance have liberated me physically from the controlling reach of the enemy, my thoughts are still imprisoned by it”.⁶⁸ This was indeed a significant change in outlook. Some specific responses from writers to the conflict and to their new situation after the 1948 Congress, as they joined the Resistance against the French are illustrated and discussed below.

By the time of the 1949 conference, there was a less pluralistic and increasingly authoritarian direction. There are questions here as to the causes of this change – it is possible that the Chinese Communist victory of 1949, and the subsequent opening up of the border, together with the influx of Chinese advisors may be part of the reason and enabled Trường Chinh to push his ideas.⁶⁹ Some echoes of Mao Zedong’s Yan’an “Talks” can be seen as early as 1943 in Trường Chinh’s *Theses of Vietnamese Culture*, particularly in the suggestions in the *Theses* concerning popularisation (*đại chúng hóa*). The need, as the leadership saw it, to get closer to the people, to become of and for the masses, even “as an ox”, had become a loud call indeed by the time of the 1949 Conference of Debate. Thus, it appears that the cry for popularisation, at least, fitted with similar ideas developing in China, if not derived from them. Some of the ways in

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 99.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 116.

⁶⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 116.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 83.

which the requirement for *dại chúng hóa* has been interpreted can be seen in the artistic styles used in the Việt Minh propaganda in the following chapter.

Unfortunately, internal Party debates are not fully accessible to the researcher. For example, the Marxist view that even a supposedly “neutral” or “pure view” taken by an artist, working as a free individual, is not actually free of the social and cultural baggage that forms the person of the artist is a respectable argument. What is not clear is the source of the Party's “correct” viewpoint, although Mao Zedong in his “Talks” raises a number of the debating points. For example, on the “art for art’s sake” argument Mao dismisses the idea of an abstract reality: “Is there such a thing as human nature? Of course there is. But there is only human nature in the concrete, no human nature in the abstract”.⁷⁰ And, in discussing “the fundamental point of departure for art and literature”, he says: “Fundamentally, we do not start from a concept but from objective practice”.⁷¹ Mao thus seems to reject the concept that art can exist in a pure or sublime state, free of the concrete nature of its creators. Insofar as the discussions within the Việt Minh are visible, there are hints of disagreements within the Party – such as at the time of the arrest of the poet Trần Dần by over-eager cadres in 1956, his attempted suicide, and his release when Party leaders learned of it.⁷² There appears to have been some considerable internal Party debate on these matters, but the details remain to be uncovered.

A further question that arises has to do with the nature and effectiveness of the propaganda produced. The writer Nguyễn Đình Thi, for example “could see how effective art and literature could be for the Party and the revolution, that ‘literature and art is a kind of propaganda without propagandising, and precisely because of this that it is the most effective form of propaganda’”.⁷³

⁷⁰ Mao Tse-tung, *Talks at Yennan*, p. 39.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 39.

⁷² See Ninh, *A World Transformed*, p. 140.

⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 80.

Literature in the 1940s

A consideration of the way in which writers approached the situations in which they found themselves can lead the way to an understanding of the background to some of the visual mobilisation material that is the subject of Chapter 6. The political situation that writers and artists faced was discussed above, and in this section I want to comment briefly on some literary works of the period that I regard as both representative and informative. Some of the features of literary protests during the 1930s were discussed in Chapter 2.

***Là thi sĩ – To be a Poet* (Sóng Hồng – Trường Chinh) (1944)⁷⁴**

Là thi sĩ was written about a year after the *Theses on Vietnamese Culture* by the same author. It was published in the clandestine paper *Cờ Giải Phóng* (*Flag of Liberation*), number 4 of 18 April 1944. It is not really possible to make comments about the poetic form invoked here, since this is a translation (the specific translator not being attributed), beyond to say that there does not appear be use of obvious poetic devices, such as rhyme or rhythm. The Vietnamese text may show a different poetic skill.

The first part of the poem is a series of 4 and 5-line statements of the kind:

If to be a poet means...

where the possibilities of individualistic and personal romantic poetry are explored. The last “If” leads into the next section where the consequences of this kind of romanticism are detailed:

If to be a poet is to spread an elegant brocade
To cover the sores of a tyranny [*sic*] in decay

Then such a poet is shown to bend the knee in the hope:

Of catching a whiff of the droppings that fall from the rich

The second half of the work shows us the kind of poetry written by:

True artists, noble and pure

⁷⁴ Sóng Hồng (1944) (Trường Chinh). “To Be a Poet (*Là thi sĩ*)”, translated by Mary Cowen, Carolyn Swetland, Đặng Thế Bình, Paddy Farrington, Elizabeth Hodgkin and Hữu Ngọc, in *Vietnamese Literature: Historical Background and Texts*, pp. 568-571, edited by Nguyễn Khắc Viện and Hữu Ngọc. Hanoi: Red River Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1976, p. 568.

Such a poet will “sing liberty”, and “raise high the song” for their native land. There follows references to Vietnamese heroes, ancient and modern, including the heroes of the Nationalist Party who were beheaded in Yên Bái in June 1930.⁷⁵ Wider considerations than those of nationalism are alluded to, as other poets are exhorted:

To be a poet must be to join in the chorus that swells
The choir of the planet in struggle

Poets must:

Drop the pen and snatch up the sword!
Oh poet! rise up!

and there is a very small allusion to class and Marxist-Leninism in the last few lines:

Your verse together with our workers' hands
Shall plough the furrows of a splendid future
Whose burgeoning already has burst forth
In the great triumph of the Soviet land.

Trang's Wife (Kim Lan) (1945)⁷⁶

An example of a writer who “rose up” and “snatched the sword” of realism and wrote with a social conscience is Kim Lan, who wrote *Trang's Wife*, a realist short story. Trang lives in a poor quarter, normally a happy community, but now driven to despair by hunger (1944-1945 was a time of severe famine). Trang, middle-aged and balding, works by delivering rice, which earns him a wage, insufficient to enable him to buy any of it. In this simple, but well-told tale, he meets and befriends a woman at the market and takes her home to his mother as his wife.⁷⁷ The home is made whole, cleaned and happy – Trang “had become the head of a family. He would have children under this roof”.⁷⁸ However, it is 1944 or 1945, people are dying in the streets from hunger and the French are still extorting taxes. His new wife is astonished “What, you are still paying taxes here”, and she goes on to describe the activities of the Việt Minh, refusing to pay taxes, taking rice and distributing it to the poor. Trang has seen these things but not understood, now he is

⁷⁵ Hy V. Luong. *Revolution in the Village: Tradition and Transformation in North Vietnam, 1925-1988*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992., page 111.

⁷⁶ Kim Lan (1945). “Trang's Wife”, in *The Watchmaker of Dien Bien Phu*, pp. 9-23. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1974.

⁷⁷ It is not easy to give the Western reader the feeling of this action. A woman in Vietnam leaves her own family upon marriage, and truly becomes the daughter of her husband's mother.

⁷⁸ Kim Lan, *Trang's Wife*, p. 20.

reminded of “seeing the crowd of starving people and the red flag snapping in the wind...”.⁷⁹

Trang's Wife is one of the early realist stories written to gain support for the Việt Minh. The events described – starving people coming into the big city from the provinces, bodies lying smelling and unburied, pitifully small meals lacking any nutrition, constant pressure for taxes – from the 1944 and 1945 famine were widely known,⁸⁰ and this tale could have spread knowledge of this pain in the North to other parts of the country, although we do not know how widely it was published. It could also have spread abroad the message of hope that the Việt Minh wished to offer. The famine is also remembered in poetry:

Remember that third month, the year *Ất-dậu*⁸¹
The *Lạc-Hồng*⁸² race endured its direst woe
as corpses tottered roaming roads and streets,
then dropped from hunger not to rise again.

They starved from Bắc-giang to Hà-nội,
They starved from Thái-bình to Gia-lâm.

...

Four suburbs opened rows and rows of graves,
which corpses soon would fill without a break,
and clouds of flies would darken all that land...

They died and died! Two million people died!⁸³

***The Eyes* (Nam Cao) (1948)⁸⁴**

The story of *The Eyes* is relatively simple. In it the narrator goes to see Hoàng, a writer from Hanoi who is living in a village as a refugee from the fighting in Hanoi.

Hoàng, knowing nothing of the countryside, is confused, irritated and unsympathetic and

⁷⁹ Kim Lan, *Trang's Wife*, pp. 22-23.

⁸⁰ See also David G. Marr. *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, especially pp. 96-107 and, in particular, Văn Tạo and Furuta Motoo. *Nạn đói năm 1945 ở Việt Nam - những chứng tích lịch sử*. Hanoi: Institute of History of Vietnam, 1995.

⁸¹ *Ất dậu* is the year 1945 (lunar calendar), and the third lunar month began on 12 April 1945 (see http://www.informatik.uni-leipzig.de/~duc/amlich/vncal_engl.html).

⁸² Often written as *Hồng-Lạc*, the legendary founders of the Vietnamese race.

⁸³ Bàng Ba Lân. “They starved, They starved (*Đói, Đói*)” (translated by Huỳnh Sanh Thông), *The Vietnam Forum*, vol. 5 (Winter-Spring, 1985): 101-107. This poem may have been published elsewhere, and earlier.

⁸⁴ Nam Cao (1948). “The Eyes”, in *The Watchmaker of Dien Bien Phu*, pp. 24-41. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1974.

disdainful towards his peasant neighbours. Hoàng has ceased writing and makes few friends in the village, considering his fellow refugees dull and unrefined. He knows little of the revolution that is occurring around him. His one pleasure is in reading (and re-reading) the one classical Chinese novel he possesses. The story ends with the narrator going to sleep on a soft bed, under a mosquito net, in luxury he has not known for a long time. We are told that his usual bed is “in the printing house itself, under the lights and in the middle of the noise of the machines”,⁸⁵ in sharp contrast with the lifestyle of this somewhat effete and unhappy refugee, Hoàng.

The Eyes is an important story. It illustrates a concern that arose in intellectual discussion, particularly in the 1948 and 1949 conferences – that is, the way in which writers viewed the masses – the peasantry, the workers, the ordinary people. Nguyễn Khắc Viện, commenting on revolutionary literature and discussing the Marxist-Leninist viewpoint, expresses the concern this way:

Literature had to reflect social life...An artist's genius lay not in plumbing the depths of his own individual soul divorced from social relationships, and producing works devoid of content; but in sharpening his sensitivity and setting his imagination to work on the endless material furnished by social life. One could not remain uninvolved in the great problems which moved humanity.⁸⁶

Nam Cao's *The Eyes* is a call to wake up, to sharpen sensitivity to social life, and to become involved in the problems of humanity. In the story, the narrator remarks that Hoàng “had noticed the apparent stupidity of the peasant's words without seeing the purity and beauty of the intentions which the words hid”. He asks “With such eyes, what use would his travelling be?”.⁸⁷ The problem that Nam Cao sees for Hoàng (and all like him) is a problem of perception. What eyes can we use to get beyond our first impressions and see inner beauty and meaning? How can the writer (or other artist) “go deeply among the people”,⁸⁸ how to make a revolution within the writer? Nam Cao has

⁸⁵ Nam Cao, *The Eyes*, p. 40.

⁸⁶ Nguyễn Khắc Viện. “Historical Background”, translated by Mary Cowen, Carolyn Swetland, Đặng Thế Bình, Paddy Farrington, Elizabeth Hodgkin and Hữu Ngọc, Part One, in *Vietnamese Literature: Historical Background and Texts*, pp. 33-192, edited by Nguyễn Khắc Viện and Hữu Ngọc. Hanoi: Red River Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1976, p. 142.

⁸⁷ Nam Cao, *The Eyes*, p. 34.

⁸⁸ This phrase is quoted from Ninh, *A World Transformed*, p. 84, and is contained in Hồ Chí Minh's letter to the 1948 congress.

thus raised the problem, not of using the writer's art for the people, but of producing an art that is of the people. This problem was to become something of an obsession for those who were determined to produce a social revolution, as well as a class revolution in Vietnam and reflects the concerns raised by Mao Zedong in his “Yan’an Talks”. Kim Ninh comments that *The Eyes* “was written by a writer for his peers, or at the very least, to clarify his own position in the ideological struggle”.⁸⁹ Nam Cao was unable to continue this discussion with his fellow writers, as he died in action in 1951 while on a trip to his home village in Hà Nam.⁹⁰

Dead Leaves (Võ Huy Tâm) (1952)⁹¹

Dead Leaves is one chapter from Võ Huy Tâm’s first novel *Vùng Mỏ (Mining Country)*. This chapter is an account of what it is like to be as worthless as dead autumn leaves, in a prison cell where death comes to you or to your companions arbitrarily, painfully and unexpectedly. Like other stories of the time, torture is a recurring undercurrent, particularly torture of the young and defenceless. The hero of *Dead Leaves* is the old man Thu, who is one among a number of people in a cell of a French prison. People are periodically taken out of the cell for execution and others, bearing dreadful wounds of torture, are thrown into the filth of the cell to be cared for by the other inmates as best they can. The climax of the chapter comes as Thu and a companion are called to be taken out of the cell to be killed. He turns to those who remain, and says:

We are honest people. We can die, there will be no lack of people to look after our graves.

recalling for them that they are part of a wide community that has a love and care for them. Individuals may die, but the community survives and will fight on. This chapter of Võ Huy Tâm’s work is very much the kind of socialist realist literature admired by the leaders of the revolution.

⁸⁹ Ninh, *A World Transformed*, pp. 72-73.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 71.

⁹¹ Võ Huy Tâm (1952). “Dead Leaves (excerpt)”, translated by Mary Cowen, Carolyn Swetland, Đặng Thế Bình, Paddy Farrington, Elizabeth Hodgkin and Hữu Ngọc, in *Vietnamese Literature: Historical Background and Texts*, pp. 809-811, edited by Nguyễn Khắc Viện and Hữu Ngọc. Hanoi: Red River Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1976, p. 809.

Summary

Vietnam did not achieve independence in isolation. The leaders of the Việt Minh were well aware of cultural movements in France, the USSR and China, even if they were not participants, and the ideas of empowering the peasantry were common to the revolutionary movements. *Tuyên truyền* is a cultural activity, and cultural practitioners who were attracted to the Revolution and Resistance in Vietnam used the ideas of revolution in their works, and often put their abilities to use in the educational and persuasive tasks of the Việt Minh. Writers and artists were persuaded to form the National Salvation Cultural Association under the aegis of the Việt Minh and to develop a philosophy of art which saw art as a service to the people (as conceived by the Party). Art was seen as inevitably conveying a message, always as a medium of persuasion, even if it was so-called “pure” art, and the essential problem at a time of revolution and resistance was that the art must carry the right message. Writers took to portraying images of the struggle by ordinary people and writing inspirational poetry. Many artists and writers moved to the liberated areas in the *Việt bắc* to work on mobilisation and educational materials to help the Resistance, while others returned to the French controlled cities.

It would be a mistake to assume that all Việt Minh *tuyên truyền* was simply an attempt to impose ideas and ideals from an authoritarian government on an unwitting or unwilling peasantry. Artists and writers participated willingly and joyfully, at least initially, in an attempt to educate the people about the necessity for action against the French colonialists, and they debated at length, as the pages of publications such as *Tiên Phong* show us, about the proper use of their crafts. The following chapter discusses some of the poetic and visual material which they produced, and shows how it was produced “for the masses”, to defeat the three enemies – the French (*giặc Pháp*), hunger and famine (*giặc đói*), ignorance and illiteracy (*giặc dốt*). The next chapter will also show how the persuasive techniques that were used most effectively were closer to those in the style and manner of Feng Zikai, rather than in techniques of bombast and polemic.

Chapter 6

Engaging with the Villagers of the *Việt bắc*

Regardless of Hồ Chí Minh's declaration of independence for Vietnam in Ba Đình square, Hanoi, on 2 September 1945,¹ French forces were actively seeking return of Vietnam to colonial status a mere three weeks later.² The rest of 1945 and all of 1946 saw increasing French involvement in Vietnam, particularly in the southern part of the country. In spite of several attempts at agreement between the would-be colonisers and the new Vietnamese Government – the 6 March 1946 Preliminary Accord signed in Hanoi³ and the *modus vivendi* signed in France on 14 September in particular – fighting between the two sides, the French colonial administration and the Việt Minh, broke out on 19 December 1946. The relationship between the French colonial administration and the Việt Minh Government in Hanoi (the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam – DRV)⁴ had been particularly strained ever since France returned to northern Vietnam on 6-7 March⁵ and differences became irreconcilable after fighting started in Hanoi. The details of who was responsible for initiating the opening skirmish remain murky – Tønnesson comments that “What happened on December 19, 1946, still belongs on the shadowy side of history. Not only the Vietnamese, but the French as well, have had something to hide”.⁶ As a result of the events of that day, Hồ Chí Minh issued his “Call for Nationwide Resistance”⁷ and this marks the start of the *Kháng chiến Chống Thực dân*

¹ David G. Marr. *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, pp. 532-535.

² *ibid.*, pp. 541-542.

³ See Roger Lévy. *L'Indochine et Ses Traités 1946*. Paris: Centre d'Études de Politique Étrangère, Section d'Information, 1947, pp. 46-48 for a copy of the 6 March Accord, reproduced in Appendix I. See also Fredrik Logevall. *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam*. New York: Random House, 2012, pp. 133-135 for a discussion of the forces acting on Hồ Chí Minh and Jean Sainteny that resulted in the 6 March Preliminary Accord, which allowed for the complete withdrawal of French forces after 5 years..

⁴ Throughout this thesis I use the term “Việt Minh Government”, but others refer to the same entity as the “DRV Government”.

⁵ See Stein Tønnesson. *Vietnam 1946: How the war began*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2010, pp. 61-62 for a description of the return of the French to Haiphong and Hanoi.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 201.

⁷ The “Call” has been published many times. See, for example:

Hồ Chí Minh (1946). “Appeal for Nation-wide Resistance”, translated by the publisher, in *Hồ Chí Minh: Selected Writings (1920-1969)*, p. 68. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1973.

Hồ Chí Minh (1946). “Lời kêu gọi toàn quốc kháng chiến”, in *Hồ Chí Minh: Chiến tranh nhân dân Việt Nam*, pp. 116-117. Hanoi: Nxb Quân đội nhân dân.

Hồ Chí Minh. “Lời kêu gọi toàn quốc kháng chiến”, in *Toàn Tập*, Vol. 4 (2-9-1945 ...continued on page 148

Pháp, or the Resistance Against French Colonialism. This chapter studies some of the visual material that was produced by Việt Minh Government agencies to mobilise people to take part in that Resistance.

Mobilisation Material

The Museum of the Revolution in Hanoi keeps a collection of posters, pamphlets and artefacts related to the Việt Minh mobilisation drive and, while the staff have done what can be done to conserve the material, many of the examples were not in good condition when first collected – often the paper had become discoloured, was originally very thin and sometimes had been torn – and subsequent events have only added to the problems. In addition to the materials in the Museum of the Revolution, there are booklets (and the odd pamphlet) in the National Library of Vietnam many of which also in a delicate condition. The items of *tuyên truyền* that are considered in this chapter are visual materials from the Museum of the Revolution, consisting of posters meant for display in market places, schools and anywhere else that people may gather. A few special exhibitions were also organised by the Việt Minh propagandists and some of this visual material may also have been used there.

Much of the early propaganda art work shown here was produced under trying circumstances, usually using improvised materials, until the opening of the Resistance Fine Arts School in 1951.⁸ Of the posters available which can be dated, most are from the early years of the Resistance:⁹

to 12-1947) of 10, pp. 202-205. Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Sự Thật for Viện Mác - Lê-nin, 1984.

⁸ Trần Khánh Chương. “Một bộ sưu tập quý”, translated by Lê Thị Thúy Hoàn, in *9 Năm Kháng Chiến Qua Tranh Tuyên Truyền Cổ Động* [9 years of resistance war through propaganda paintings and posters], pp. 7-10, edited by Triều Văn Hiền, Trần Hải Nhị, Lê Thị Thúy Hoàn and Ngô Thị Ba. Hà Nội: SAVINA for Bảo tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2007, pp. 8,10.

⁹ Many of the examples of the posters that have survived have now been published in a limited-edition book produced by the Museum of the Revolution:

Triều Văn Hiền, Trần Hải Nhị, Lê Thị Thúy Hoàn and Ngô Thị Ba (Compilers). *9 Năm Kháng Chiến Qua Tranh Tuyên Truyền Cổ Động* [9 years of resistance war through propaganda paintings and posters], translated by Lê Thị Thúy Hoàn. Hà Nội: SAVINA for Bảo tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2007.

The illustrations shown in this chapter have been reproduced from my own photographic collection. In some cases there is a small disparity between the dates shown in the Museum’s publication and the Museum’s own catalogue and, in those cases, I have deferred to the catalogue dates as they seem more reliable.

1947	4 posters
1948	41 (including 2 large series comprising 29 posters in total)
1949	25 (including 3 series comprising 10 posters)
1950	6
1951	2 (in one series)
1952	4
1953	2
1954	4

It is most likely that the poster form was more important for the propagandists in the early years, before the literacy campaigns had been able to have a general impact, although some of the posters have a considerable amount of text in them – see for example, the poster at Illustration 6-16 on page 172 which, like the material discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, was probably designed to be read to listeners by *tuyên truyền* cadres. In general, posters produced towards the end of the Resistance period tend to have more space devoted to text and are probably designed to be used as part of instructional sessions, rather than for their direct visual impact.

Much of the material presented here makes use of what we may call a “social proof” persuasion technique.¹⁰ That is, the material tries to use social pressure to persuade the viewer that the activity that is being portrayed is common and is being done by a great many people who are, in most respects, just like the viewer. A variation on this technique, which is seen in some of the mobilisation material, is that of “naming and shaming”, where the “social proof” technique takes on a negative and more severe aspect. As will be shown, there is very little material based on appeals to authority figures, except in one important topic, and that is the instruction material, which covers matters such as living in the forest areas, avoiding health problems, setting up markets and schools in such a way as to not attract the attention of the enemy and avoiding French bombing. This material has

¹⁰ Much has been written about this technique as it applies in modern Western societies. See for example Robert B. Cialdini. *Influence: Science and Practice*, 5th edition. Boston, New York, San Francisco: Pearson Education, 2009, pp. 97-140.

an authoritarian basis, but the tenor is not that of an authoritarian figure lecturing the population but more the demonstration of wisdom in the matters addressed.¹¹

Songs and Symbols of Resistance

As discussed above, some of the propaganda material was developed by professional artists who fled to the *Việt bắc* after fighting broke out in December 1946. One of the important communication techniques used by the makers of the *tuyên truyền* was the use of symbols,¹² such as *ca dao* – the folk sayings and poems written in *lục bát* form, a form discussed in Chapter 3. Actual *ca dao* were used in the newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập*¹³ and the *ca dao* form is used in many of the early propaganda posters. An example is shown in Illustration 6-1 from Lạng Sơn (of unknown date). The text reads:



Illustration 6-1: Don't trade with or work for the enemy. (DSCN0344, 935/Gy140)

Bãi công bãi thị ai ơi! Hey everybody, go on strike!
Không buôn không bán với loài thực dân. Don't trade, don't sell to the colonials.

¹¹ Again, much has been written on persuasion by appeal to authority figures, particularly as it applies in modern Western societies. See *ibid.*, pp. 174-197.

¹² The interpretation of things such as *ca dao* as symbols may seem contentious, but it conforms with the use of the term in anthropological studies. See, for example, Chapter 5 "Society: A Set of Symbols" in Joy Hendry. *An Introduction to Social Anthropology: Other People's Worlds*. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999, pp. 82-96, especially pp. 91-92 on group symbols.

¹³ Some examples are shown in Chapter 4.

The word *loài* (type, kind, species) as used on the second line deserves some comment, as it does double duty. First, it is used to form the *lục-bát* rhyme with *ơ* in the previous line (although the verse could easily have been rewritten so that *với* did this job). Second, it makes the reference to the French as “the colonial species”, a belittling epithet, in the eyes of the local people, for the colonial overlord. In other material studied, the term *bọn* (meaning “gang”) is used to describe the French enemy, but that is not used here.¹⁴ The picture has been made using a lithography technique to print the black ink and the green and yellow colours painted in by hand after printing, the green for the leafy forest environment of the woman and the yellow for the built environment of the man.



*Illustration 6-2: Detail of tradesman.
(DSCN244, 935/Gy140)*

Like some of the other examples which are used in this Chapter, the picture shows a young Vietnamese woman, an itinerant seller in this case, carrying her goods on her shoulder pole (*đòn gánh*) turning her back and walking into the forest away from the “colonial species” while, in what is almost a separate picture, a male Vietnamese worker is picking up his tools, including his Vietnamese carpenters’ saw (see detail in Illustration 6-2), and walking away from a colonial building. The type of carpenters’ saw depicted is peculiar to Vietnam and, due to the difficulty of using it skilfully, can be considered a symbol for an experienced and talented

tradesman¹⁵ or, as here, as a general symbol for skill. Similarly, the woman’s carrying pole is a symbol of strength and expertise, as one can carry quite heavy loads over long distances with such a tool.¹⁶ The use of these two tools as symbols places this picture firmly into the home socio-cultural environment of peasants and workers in the north of

¹⁴ The classifier *thằng* (used for little boys or inferior beings) could also have been used, but it would not fit the rhyme.

¹⁵ This is so in modern Vietnam (personal observations over many years, particularly while working in Hanoi with artisans installing art works in 2002) and I am assuming that the same symbolism was most likely to have been in operation in the late 1940s in northern Vietnam.

¹⁶ Vietnamese friends tell me that they still refer to setting up a “*đòn gánh*” situation, where appropriate tools are put in place, or situations engendered, so that they are sure to win.

Vietnam for whom these tools are essential parts of their daily lives. The people in this picture are not merely “peasants”, they are skilled, resourceful and strong. A careful and deliberate appeal has been made using the “social proof” technique of persuasion – the picture appears to be saying “these people depicted are just like you, and they are boycotting the French, why don’t you?”.

Another poster which uses the *lục-bát* poetic form is shown at Illustration 6-3. The text is as follows:

<i>Em ơi, em ngủ say rồi,</i>	Baby baby deeply sleeping,
<i>Ngon đèn chị thấp, chị ngồi chị may</i>	By the lamp I lit, I sit I sew
<i>Cho xong áo trấn-thủ này,</i>	This padded vest I will finish,
<i>Gửi đến chiến-sĩ kịp ngày mùa đông.</i>	To winter’s soldiers, timely it will go.
<i>Để cho chiến-sĩ ấm lòng,</i>	For the soldier’s heart it’s warming
<i>Vững tay cầm súng, ra công diệt thù.</i>	Steady, holding the gun, on a mission to
	kill the enemy.

This picture comes from Lạng Sơn, from the Information Department, and is dated by the Museum of the Revolution as from 1949, although it could have been made earlier than this.¹⁷ Again, it has been produced by a lithographic process on locally-made *dó* paper and hand colouring added later. The artist seems to be unknown to the Museum of the Revolution, but the picture is apparently signed by “Uoc”.

Technically this is a very accomplished drawing. The baby’s cot is inclined so that the viewer can see the baby, who is thus a centre of interest in the picture, the shadows in the room emanate from the lamp which the mother has lit and she is intent on her task. The text refers to *chị* (usually translated as “older sister”) and the baby as *em* (“younger sibling”), but these are *Nùng* people and *Nùng* people commonly use these terms between mother and child. The people are from the *Nùng* ethnic minority who are found in the *Việt bắc*, particularly in the rural areas around the towns of Cao Bằng and Lạng Sơn, and across the border in southern China. In the picture, the baby’s cot and the woman’s

¹⁷ See Triều Văn Hiền *et al*, *9 Năm Kháng Chiến*, p. 21, where the date is given, probably erroneously, as 1946. 1947 and 1948 are also possible dates, but the catalogue at the Museum specifies 1949. Friends report that this type of vest became more common after 1948.



Illustration 6-3: *Softly sleep while I sew.* DSCN0329, 1950/Gy640

headdress are typical of the *Nùng* people, and the artist has given an impression of a typical hut with woven bamboo walls used very commonly throughout Vietnam.¹⁸

Several symbols which are very strong for the people of the *Việt bắc* have been included in the picture. The *áo trấn thủ* is a type of padded jacket needed by soldiers fighting in the winter campaigns in the north, where the temperature can occasionally fall low enough for snow,¹⁹ and that type of jacket figures in other examples of the visual propaganda from the region, serving as a symbol of the local soldier supported by, and supporting, the local population. The picture in Illustration 6-3 is urging local women to turn their hands to the production of *áo trấn thủ* by using the “social proof” method of persuasion and for male viewers it affirms the commitment of their wives, sisters and girl-friends to their sacrifice.

¹⁸ The information about the use of the words *chị* and *em* among the *Nùng* people, and the baby's cot come from my observations and discussions with informants at Quảng Uyên, a small town about 12 km from Cao Bằng in January 2004.

¹⁹ Snow was reported in the mountainous regions several times while I was on field-work and visits to Vietnam in 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008.

The same message with a quite different set of symbols and persuasive technique, but also using *lục-bát* verse form is shown in the poster reproduced as Illustration 6-4, which is a reproduction of a poster from 1949.²⁰ The work was done by lithographic technique with subsequent hand colouring. The artist is unknown but there is at least one other poster in the Museum's collection, purportedly from 1948, in the same style as this one, making the same appeal for warm clothing. The text reads:



Illustration 6-4: Sew warm jackets for the army. DSCN0352, 1325/Gy338.

May áo trần thủ cho bộ đội
*Ai kia chần nệm giường màn
Áo cho binh sĩ ngủ màn nghĩ chưa
Sương sa lạnh tự bao giờ
Đông rồi đừng dằng dặt chờ nữa chi*

Sew warm jackets for the army
Those who are far away in blanket and
bed
And not yet thought about warm jackets
for the soldiers
The time of cold fog has arrived
Winter has come, wait no longer

Again, the folk-idiom of the *lục-bát* verse form is used to present the text, an idiom which in itself is a strong symbol connecting with the local intended audience. The other symbols used by the artist here include figures of lightly-clad soldiers, struggling against the rain

²⁰ According to the catalogue of the Museum of the Revolution, this poster was issued in Tuyên Quang province and is dated 15 December 1949. The date is given erroneously as 1946 in Triều Văn Hiền *et al*, 9 *Năm Kháng Chiến*, see p. 26.

and the cold, the cold weather and season symbolised by falling autumn leaves. The appeal is to reciprocity – the soldiers are working for you, you women are comfortably in your bed, give something back for what has been given to you.

The last example shown here of a poster specifically using the *lục-bát* verse form is reproduced at Illustration 6-5. This particular poster is one of a series of three produced in Yên Bái province for spring of the year Kỷ Sửu (1949), probably in celebration of the Tết Nguyên Đán (lunar New Year) festival. At the time the “educate the people” campaign was in full swing and this poster is a contribution to that cause.



Illustration 6-5: Learn your letters if you want to visit. DSCN0357.

The text reads as follows:

*Xuân sang hoa lá tươi cười
Có chàng dốt chữ phải chui cổng mù
Còn anh đã biết đọc chưa?
Nếu chưa xin chớ sang nhà, em không*

Spring comes, fresh flowers and leaves
smile
A young ignorant man wants to slip
under the gate of illiteracy
Can you not yet read?
If no, then please don't come to my
house, I don't want you.

In common with other verses in this form, it has been written as from a young woman, in this case making it plain that an illiterate young man is not what she wants, it is shameful to be illiterate and it may be more difficult to find a partner.

The picture is particularly rich in symbolism, employing many symbols of importance to the folk cultures of northern Vietnam. An old toad (*con cóc*) is teaching literacy to the young ones, teaching first the “*i t*” (pronounced “ee-ter”), which is as symbolic as is “ABC” in the English language, that is, it stands for the first steps in learning to read and write a language with a phonetically based script. This particular symbol is commonly used in the *tuyên truyền* wherever literacy is discussed and there are many other examples – it is a symbol of basic learning. The text of the poster carries another symbol, in the suggestion of an amorous encounter, such encounters being a staple of folk *ca dao* songs in *lục bát* verse form. The young man referred to wants to come in to the woman’s house by slipping under the “illiteracy gate” (which did exist as more than metaphor – village gates through which only the literate could pass), but she wants one who is wise enough to get an education for himself. The words are used to raise respect for literacy and to enhance the status of those who have the ability to read and write.

The image in the poster continues an ancient tradition of “toads”. The toad is a very old symbol in Vietnam and small toad figures appear on a few of the Đông Sơn brass drums classified as Group C in Heger’s system,²¹ which are probably about 1900-2500 years old.²² Phạm Huy Thông, in his undated essay (probably written just before his death in 1988²³), writes:

We also know why at a certain point in the process of their development, Đông Sơn drums were furnished with three-dimensional figures of toads. A widely known popular saying in Viet Nam calls the toad “the uncle of the

²¹ Bùi Văn Vượng. *Bronze Casting in Việt Nam*. Hà Nội: NXB Thế Giới, 2008, p. 10.

²² There is some small uncertainty and dispute about the age of the Đông Sơn drums. Peter Bellwood states that the most probable period is “between 500 B.C. and A.D. 100”. See Peter Bellwood. *Man's Conquest of the Pacific: The Prehistory of Southeast Asia and Oceania*. Auckland, Sydney, London: Collins, 1978, p. 185. On the other hand it has been said that they are possibly 5000 years old. See Phạm Huy Thông (n.d.). “Introduction”, in *Đông Sơn Drums in Vietnam*, pp. 262-282, edited by Phạm Huy Thông, Phạm Minh Huyền, Nguyễn Văn Hảo and Lại Văn Tới. Hanoi: The Viet Nam Social Science Publishing House, 1990, p. 262. Bellwood’s estimate is probably the most reliable.

²³ Thông mentions a 1987 publication in his essay, putting the writing of the essay at sometime between then and June 1988. See Phạm Huy Thông *et al* (eds.), *Đông Sơn Drums*, p. 271.

heavenly god”²⁴ and maintains that rain will inevitably fall when the toad raises his head and croaks. We thus identify the animal figures spaced on the edge of the tympanum as toads.²⁵

The toad thus has very strong links with the culture of agricultural communities in northern Vietnam.

The toad also occurs as a teacher in the design of a well-known humorous wood-block prints from Đông Hồ village, a modern copy of which is shown at Illustration 6-6. The propaganda poster has direct references to some of the same traditions as shown in the modern print and uses the same humorous style. Đông Hồ prints are particularly popular at the lunar new year Tết festival and the artisans of Đông Hồ village open a special market for their produce just before Tết each year.²⁶ Although this print is a modern one from the village, the original pattern was made at a time when *nôm* (and Chinese *hán*) characters were in extensive use, and were written with brush and ink. The print shows *Thầy đồ Cóc* – the toad as a traditional teacher, as in the propaganda poster.

Traditionally, the toad is usually seen as a gentle figure of fun, and occurs in several sayings and aphorisms that sometimes illustrate pomposity coupled with ignorance, such as *cóc vàng* (“golden toad”) for someone who is wealthy, but stupid. The print has two meanings, and these probably also occur in the propaganda print. The first point is that we should not think of old toads as ignorant beasts because they can be teachers, and the second meaning is that through study anyone can become respected, if not wise, and this was particularly true of the strict study methods used in the past.²⁷ Thus the propaganda poster is seen to recall for the viewer two symbols of significance to the Vietnamese people - the old symbol of the toad, and the very modern one of the new *quốc ngữ* writing system, replacing the *nôm* of the traditional print.

²⁴ The actual phrase is *Con cóc là cậu ông trời. Nếu ai đánh cóc thì trời đánh cho* meaning “The toad is the uncle (mother’s younger brother) of the heavenly god. If anyone hits the toad heaven will strike back (i.e., you’ll be hit by lightning).”

²⁵ Phạm Huy Thông n.d., in Phạm Huy Thông *et al* (eds.), *Dong Son Drums*, page 268.

²⁶ Sylvie Franchette and Nicholas Stedman. *Discovering Craft Villages in Vietnam: Ten Itineraries around Hà Nội*. Hanoi: IRD, Research Institute for Development and Thế Giới Publishers, 2009, p.148.

²⁷ This opinion about the meaning of the Đông Hồ print was given to me by staff at the Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi in October 2004.



Illustration 6-6: Đông Hồ print - Thầy đồ Cóc (Teacher Toad).

The posters studied so far have all used the *lục bát* verse form for the textual component. This particular verse form was discussed in Chapter 3 and seems to be used in nearly all Vietnamese folk songs and *ca dao* folk sayings, even to the present day.²⁸ The *lục bát* verse form is particularly important where people can not read as it seems to be able to be memorised quite readily by native Vietnamese speakers. *Ca dao*, besides being memorable, can be adapted to singing and there is whole class of lyrical *ca dao* which lend themselves to song, appreciated by literate and illiterate alike.²⁹ Literacy rates in Vietnam, at least at the start of World War Two, were quite low, one estimate putting the rate at ten percent³⁰ and there seems little reason to suppose that there was much improvement during the War. Although the new Democratic Republic of Vietnam instituted a wide-ranging literacy campaign soon after coming to power in 1945,³¹ illiteracy was still a

²⁸ See Lư Nhất Vũ, Lê Giang and Lê Anh Trung. *Lý trong dân ca Người Việt*. Ho Chi Minh City: NXB Trẻ for Hội Văn Nghệ dân gian Việt Nam, 2006, pp. 9-12

²⁹ See, for example, the anthology Vũ Dung, Vũ Thúy Anh and Vũ Quang Hào (Compilers). *Ca dao trữ tình Việt Nam*. Hanoi: NXB Văn học, 2008.

³⁰ See David G. Marr. *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981, p. 34.

³¹ See Hồ Chí Minh (1945). "Appeal to fight Illiteracy", translated by the publisher, in Hồ Chí Minh: Selected Writings (1920-1969), pp 64-65. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1973. Tréglodé puts the date of the launch as 19 June, see Benoît de Tréglodé. *Heroes and Revolution in Vietnam*, translated by Claire Duiker. Singapore: NUS Press in association with IRASEC, 2012, p. 44.

problem in the rural areas in the early stages of the Resistance and the use of the popular easily-memorised verse form was a solution to addressing a barely-literate population. That, combined with the use of popular and well-known symbols in the poster images, ensured that the message about the Resistance would appeal to a very wide audience.

The *Thi Đua* Campaign of 1948

On 11 June 1948 Hồ Chí Minh issued his *Lời Kêu Gọi Thi Đua Ái Quốc*³² – a “Call for Patriotic Emulation” – to explain what was meant by the establishment of the *Thi Đua Ái Quốc* Mobilisation committees on 1 June 1948 through Decree number 197/SL.³³ The concept of *thi đua* had been mentioned by Hồ Chí Minh in April before the Decree was published,³⁴ but it obviously posed some problems as it needed Hồ Chí Minh’s further explanatory call, as well as some propaganda material to show the population what was meant and what was required in practice. The concept of *thi đua* as mainly a patriotic duty, expressed in the original formulation phrase *thi đua ái Quốc*, changed fairly quickly into just *thi đua*, the *ái Quốc* (love the nation) being dropped in much of the material referring to the concept. The word *thi đua* is often translated into English as “emulation”, for example, the entry from a popular Vietnamese-English dictionary:

thi đua Emulate (*in work...*)³⁵

However, it becomes obvious when reading Hồ Chí Minh’s *Call* that “emulation” is not an adequate translation to English for *thi đua*. A more nuanced meaning is given in another dictionary:

thi đua competition, emulation; [compete] (with, in), emulate (in);
*examples...*³⁶

³² See Hồ Chí Minh (1948). “Lời kêu gọi thi đua ái quốc”, in *Hồ Chí Minh: Chiến tranh nhân dân Việt Nam*, pp. 161-163. Hanoi: Nxb Quân đội nhân dân.

³³ *60 năm Chính Phủ Việt Nam 1945-2005. 60 Years of the Vietnamese Government*. Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Thông Tấn, 2005, p. 64.

³⁴ See Hồ Chí Minh (1948). “To the National Congress of Militiamen”, translated by the publisher, in *Hồ Chí Minh: Selected Writings (1920-1969)*, pp 78-80. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1973, p. 79.

³⁵ Đặng Chấn Liêu, Lê Khả Kế and Phạm Duy Trọng. *Từ điển Việt-Anh: Vietnamese-English Dictionary*, 2nd edition. Hồ Chí Minh City: Nxb Hồ Chí Minh City for Viện Ngôn Ngữ Học Trung Tâm Khoa Học Xã Hội và Nhân Văn Quốc Gia, 2001, p. 693.

³⁶ Bùi Phụng. *Từ điển Việt-Anh: Vietnamese English Dictionary*. Hanoi: NXB Thế Giới, 2000, p. 1868. The bracketed word is misspelt in the original.

Individually, each syllable also has a meaning of “compete” or “rival”. The *Call* by Hồ Chí Minh lists the aims of the *thi đua* campaign as destroying enemies (*diệt giặc*):³⁷

<i>Diệt giặc đói khổ</i>	Wipe out the hunger and poverty enemy
<i>Diệt giặc dốt nát</i>	Wipe out the enemy of ignorance
<i>Diệt giặc ngoại xâm</i>	Wipe out the foreign invader enemy

However, the only guidance as to how these aims are to be achieved in the *Call* are listed as “work quickly – work better – work more” (*làm cho mau – làm cho tốt – làm cho nhiều*).

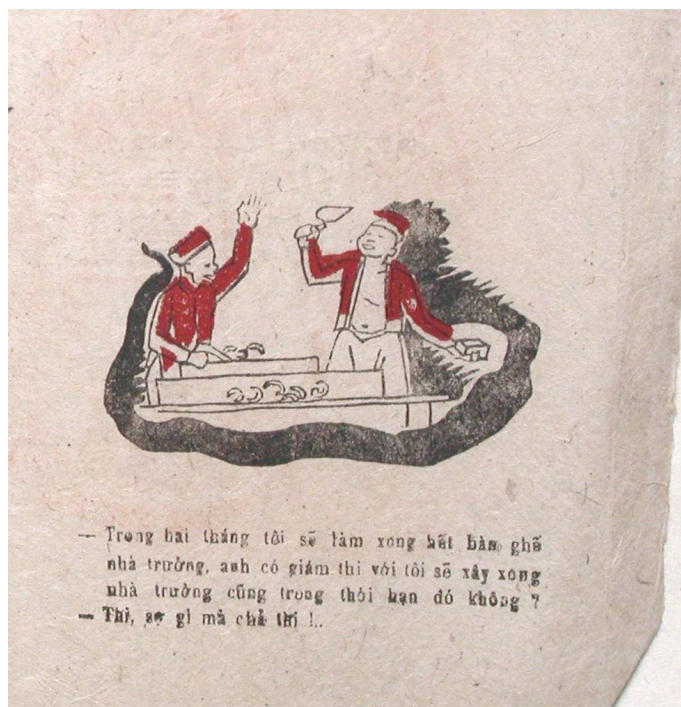


Illustration 6-7: *Thi đua in the workplace.* (DSCN0887, 1404/Gy359)

Soon after the *thi đua* campaign was launched the Việt Minh set in train a series of campaigns at village level to promote the concept,³⁸ part of which was the production of a series of posters to let the population know what was meant by *thi đua* and what it involved in practice. One of the images from that series is shown at Illustration 6-7. The story in the image is that a carpenter is working at a school building furniture and his companion (probably a bricklayer) is constructing the school buildings – they are vying with each other about the schedule for completion. The text reads:

³⁷ Hồ Chí Minh, *Lời kêu gọi thi đua ái quốc*, p. 161.

³⁸ Tréglodé, *Heroes and Revolution in Vietnam*, pp. 45-47.

- Trong hai tháng tôi sẽ làm xong hết bàn ghế nhà trường, anh có giám³⁹ thi với tôi sẽ xây xong nhà trường cũng trong thời hạn đó không?
- Thi, sợ gì mà chả thi!...
- In two months I will have finished all the tables and chairs for the school, I challenge you to compete with me. Could you also build the school to the same schedule?
- You're on!...

The two will cooperate and compete against each other to see if they can match the challenge from one of them to complete the task in time – there will not be a “winner” and a “loser” in this game,⁴⁰ as the school will receive all of the benefits. From this example, it appears that a better translation for *thi đua*, a translation that provides a meaning in English closer to the Vietnamese intention would be “cooperative competition”. Modern Vietnamese-to-Vietnamese dictionaries usually have a definition which carries this flavour of competition while preserving the cooperation aspect of *thi đua*, for example:

thi đua đg. Cùng nhau đem hết tài năng, sức lực ra làm nhằm thúc đẩy lẫn nhau đạt thành tích tốt nhất trong chiến đấu, sản xuất, công tác hoặc học tập. *Thi đua với đơn vị bạn. Phòng trào thi đua sản xuất. Chiến sĩ thi đua.*⁴¹

Cooperatively compete v. Together with each other, to carry out, to the limit of our ability and power, a productive task, with the aim of pushing each other along to achieve the best results in a battle, production, a project, study.
Cooperatively compete with other units. The competitive production unit. A competitive soldier.

An aspect of *thi đua* which has hitherto received very little comment is that *thi đua* could (and probably did) involve social sanctions, which were encouraged in some of the propaganda posters. From the same series of posters, Illustration 6-8 shows a family (the word used is *nhà*, that is, household) that does *thi đua* while Illustration 6-9 shows a family that does not take part in *thi đua*. The family that does *thi đua* is to be applauded with the cry of *hoan hô* (applause), but the family that avoids *thi đua* has to suffer the *ê ê ê ...* of shame from the rest of the community, as well as taunting by the village children. I have come across no evidence to say, one way or the other, how common was this, or similar, practice.

³⁹ The word in the poster is *giám* but the more usual spelling is *dám*. In the northern parts of Vietnam, both would have the same sound.

⁴⁰ A competition where there are winners and losers is usually called *cạnh tranh*.

⁴¹ Hoàng Phê (Head of Editorial Board). *Từ điển tiếng Việt*, 7th edition. Hà Nội - Đà Nẵng: Nxb Đà Nẵng Trung tâm từ điển học for Viện ngôn ngữ học, 2002, p. 936 (the English translation is mine).

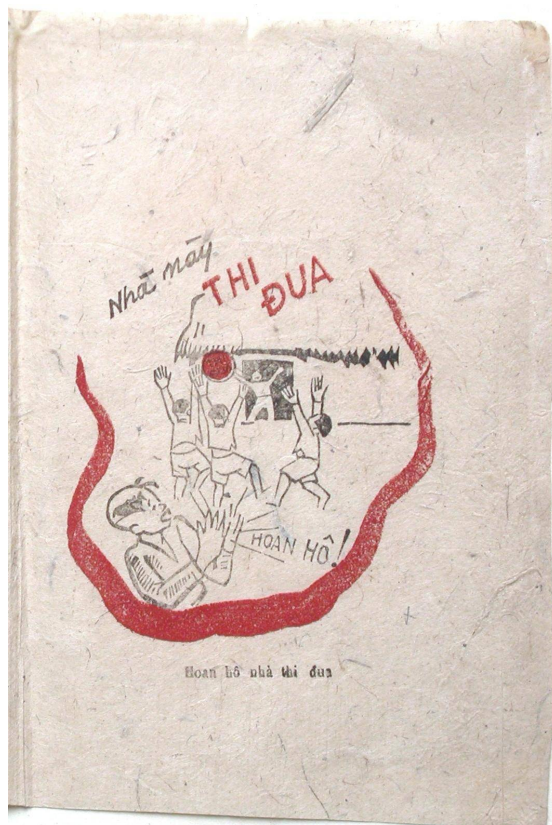


Illustration 6-8: Hoan hô nhà thi đua (Cheer the house that joins in). DSCN889, 1404/Gy359.

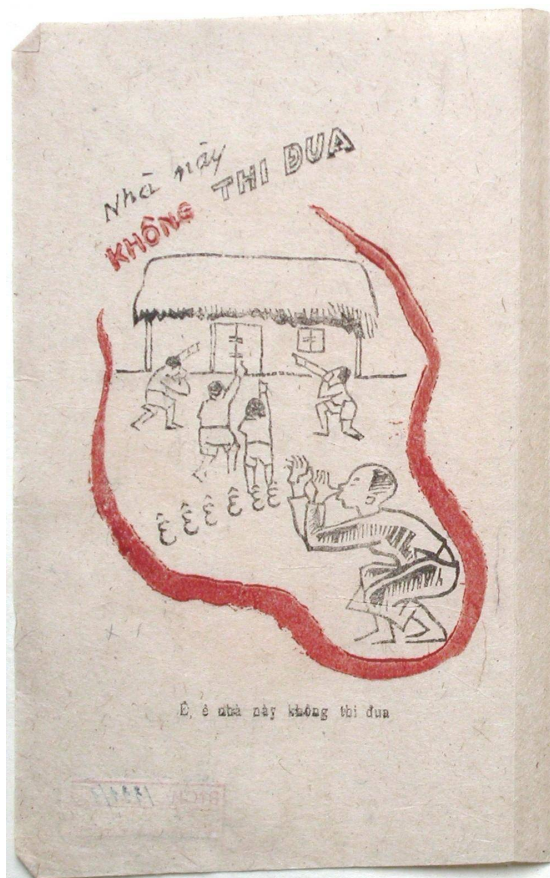


Illustration 6-9: Ê ê nhà này không thi đua (Shame on the house that doesn't join in). DSCN890, 1404/Gy359.

The main themes of *thi đua*, as outlined in Hồ Chí Minh's original *Call*, the destruction of the three enemies, is shown in a set of three posters from Bắc Giang Information Office celebrating the new lunar year of Kỷ Sửu (wood/buffalo, which began on 29 January 1949) and are shown in Illustrations 6-10 to 6-12. The pictures in the posters are full of easily-recognisable symbols and the captions all exhort all of the people to *thi đua* to eliminate the three enemies of ignorance, colonialism and hunger.



Illustration 6-10: All citizens compete in order to eliminate the enemy of ignorance.
DSCN0334, 1653, Gy485.

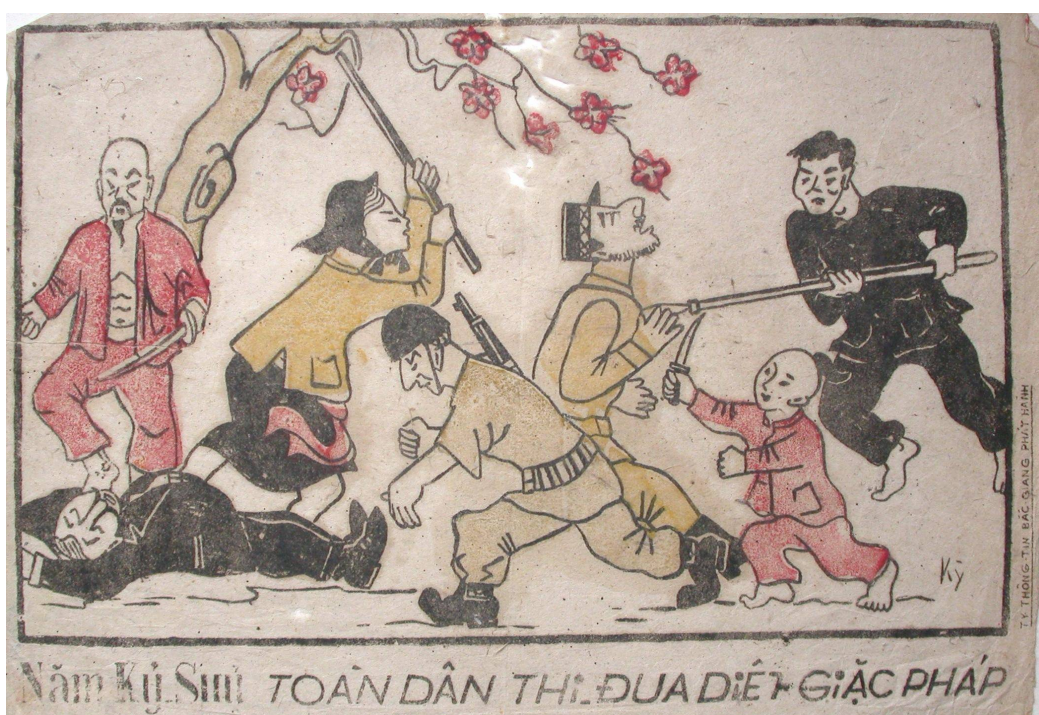


Illustration 6-11: All people compete to eliminate the French Colonial enemy.
DSCN0335, 1653, Gy485.

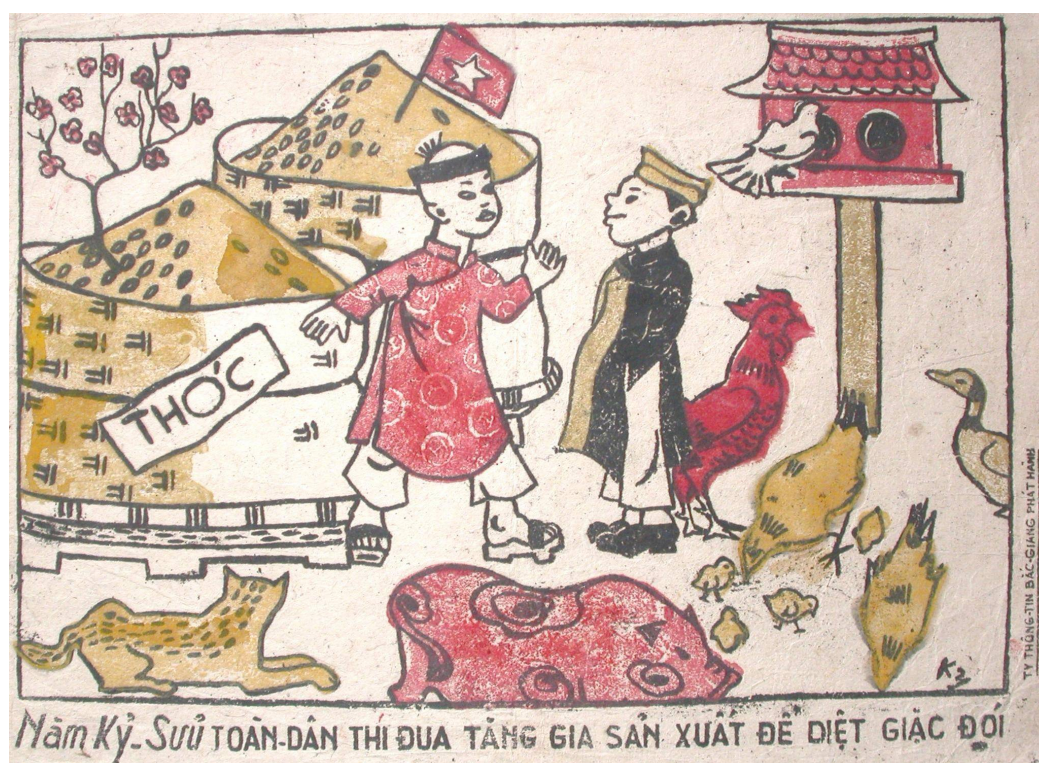


Illustration 6-12: All people compete to increase output in order to wipe out the hunger enemy. DSCN0338, 1653/Gy485.

The drawings have all been signed by “Kỷ”, which may be a pen-name for the artist, or it may be a reference to the new year (in the 10-year *can* cycle). The first (Illustration 6-10) shows, as in Illustration 6-5, the symbols of literacy, such as people (a young women, a boy and a girl in this case) learning their “*i t*” and learning the Vietnamese vowels. Illustration 6-11 shows the whole village united, under the peach tree (*cây đào*, a symbol of spring), in killing the French colonials who are shown, in the customary manner, with rather large noses⁴² and as helpless frightened individuals, one hapless soldier even being pursued by a young boy with a knife. In Illustration 6-12 all of the people are being urged to increase production so as to destroy the hunger enemy – in 1949 the great hunger of early 1945, in which maybe 1-2 million people perished, would still have been an active memory.⁴³ The picture in the poster is one of prosperity. Again, the scene takes place under the *cây đào*, the granaries are full of rice, chickens, a duck, a pig and pigeons are active – the chickens

⁴² My experience on field-work trips has been that “big nose” and “hairy skin” can still be used as a pejorative terms for foreigners.

⁴³ There is some doubt as to the extent of the deaths due to the famine of 1944, but no doubt as to the psychological trauma of the event. See Marr, *Vietnam 1945*, pp. 96-107, esp. pp. 104-105, and Văn Tạo and Furuta Motoo. *Nạn đói năm 1945 ở Việt Nam - những chứng tích lịch sử*. Hanoi: Institute of History of Vietnam, 1995, the latter, in particular, for an estimate of the death rate.

reproducing – and the two children are proudly showing off their new clothes that they have been given for *Tết Nguyên đán*, the spring and new lunar year festival. In this picture, which resembles one of the *Đông Hồ* prints, there is even a contented cat (perhaps waiting for his share of the mice from the rice store) in this village which has become prosperous by following the tenets of *thi đua*. All-in-all the scene shown is quite beyond the reach of the majority of ordinary families but, nevertheless, can be considered as “aspirational” and contributes to the general understanding of *thi đua*.

An example of the way in which *thi đua* was supposed to operate in real rural families is shown in the poster from Bắc Giang province at Illustration 6-13 below. The title is:

MỘT GIA ĐÌNH THI ĐUA ÁI QUỐC (A Patriotic Emulation Family)

and is dated (by the Museum) as 1948. The poster shows the (presumably fictional) family of “Old Ba” (*cụ Ba*) before the Government and President Hồ issued the order to begin the *thi đua* campaign and the same family after the order was issued. Given the amount of text in the poster, it was probably designed to be an instruction poster for use by *thi đua* cadres, rather than just put up in a public place to be read by passers-by. The first 8



Illustration 6-13: A Thi Đua Family. DSCN0359, 2030/Gy92

frames (the frames are numbered from the top left, going down first, then across, so the first 8 frames are those in the two columns on the left) show the family before the order was issued, and the last 12 show the family after the order was issued and Old Ba has formulated a 6-month plan to implement the instructions.

In both the “before” and “after” series, the family is involved in the four activities that all of their compatriots share, including elimination of the three enemies (colonialism, ignorance and hunger) that were also the targets in Illustrations 6-10 to 6-12:

- kill the French enemy (*Giết⁴⁴ giặc Pháp*);
- kill the enemy of hunger (*Giết giặc Đói*);
- kill the enemy of ignorance (illiteracy) (*Giết giặc Dốt*);
- Bring the new life into practice (*Thực hiện đời sống mới*).

but the “after” images show an intensification of effort and a greater dedication and focus on the tasks in hand. For example, before the 6-month plan was implemented, Bác Ty (Uncle Snake⁴⁵) and Thăng Xuân (Young Spring) raised 20 ducks and 10 chickens, but after implementing the plan they increased this by 40 birds.

One feature of what is required in “putting the new life into practice” is shown in frames numbered 6 and 15 (see Illustration 6-14). The caption for the “before” frame (number 6) is:

6 <i>Thực hiện đời sống mới: gia đình cụ Ba chưa thực hiện triệt để đời sống mới, giỗ tết vẫn ăn uống linh đình.</i>	6 Practising the new life: Old Ba’s family are not yet fully practising the new life, still celebrating death anniversaries and festivals sumptuously.
--	--

and the caption for the “after” frame (number 15) is:

⁴⁴ The word for “kill” that is used in all but the first frame is *giết*, which appears to be an older form which still occurs in a few specialist phrases with that meaning. The more commonly used term in contemporary practice is *giết*, and this may have been used in the first frame (the original poster is discoloured and has other imperfections so it is hard to be sure). It is possible that *diệt* is meant (the “gi” and “d” having the same sound in northern Vietnam), meaning “exterminate” or “destroy”.

⁴⁵ The Vietnamese names of the people in this household can be literally transcribed this way. “Snake” is probably so called, because he was born in the year of the snake.

15 Để thực hiện đời sống mới chương trình thi đua 6 tháng: những ngày rằm ngày gôi⁴⁶ nhà cụ không ăn uống linh đình mà chỉ dùng hương lửa.

15 In order to practise the new life in the 6-month cooperative competition plan: regular and memorial celebrations in Ba's house are not celebrated with sumptuous feasts, but only by lighting incense and praying.⁴⁷

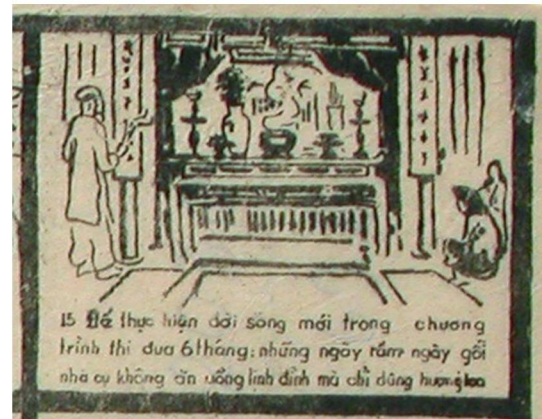


Illustration 6-14. Thi đua family (Detail - Frames 6 and 15)

Those of us who have joined in family celebrations, particularly in the northern rural areas of Vietnam, will well recognise the scene in frame numbered 6 – crowds of relatives, sumptuous meals with special dishes, challenges to drink copious quantities of rice-wine and general merriment.⁴⁸ This contrasts starkly with the more austere activities, such as lighting of incense and prayer around the family altar (with the wife submissive before the altar) as celebrations under the *thi đua* new life. The new life as depicted could only take place in a moderately well-off home or in a small temple. The altar is relatively large, carved texts (Chinese, or possibly *quốc ngữ* texts)⁴⁹ hang or stand on either side, and people are able to devote their time to this contemplative side of their lives. The *Việt Minh* leaders were basically Communist (although the Party had been dissolved in

⁴⁶ There is no word *gôi* that I can find in any dictionary, and this probably should be *giỗ*, which is a celebration for a death anniversary.

⁴⁷ The specific celebrations referred to in the text appear to be the regular mid-month (that is, middle of the lunar month), and death anniversary celebrations. The sense, though, is of any family celebration.

⁴⁸ There has been a resurgence in these practices over the past few decades - see the following discussion, and references to Shaun Malarney's anthropological work in Shaun Kingsley Malarney. "Return to the Past? The Dynamics of Contemporary Religious and Ritual Transformation", in *Postwar Vietnam: Dynamics of a Transforming Society*, pp. 225-256, edited by Hy V. Luong. Singapore and Oxford: ISEAS Singapore and Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2003 and Shaun Kingsley Malarney. *Culture, Ritual and Revolution in Vietnam*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002.

⁴⁹ Other *tuyên truyền* material about the "new life" encouraged the use of *quốc ngữ* in place of Chinese Hán characters.

November 1945) but, although atheism was a part of the ideology, ancestor worship was not discouraged. The challenge for the propagandist here, to show the desirability of this aspect of the new life, is quite large, particularly as the artist has chosen to contrast a scene of such conviviality in frame 6 with the somewhat sombre reflection in frame 15.

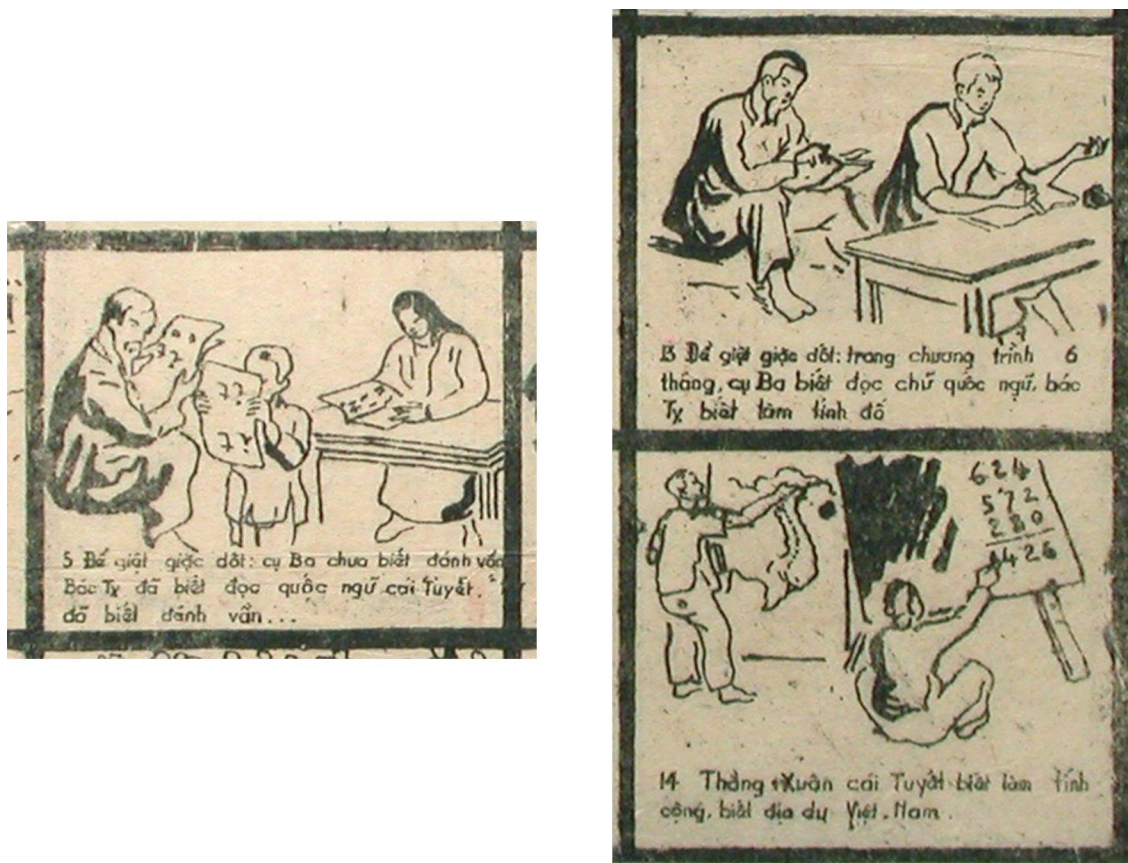


Illustration 6-15. Thi đua family (Detail - Frames 5, 13 and 14)

Shaun Malarney, in his study of the group of villages (a *phường* or district) called Thịnh Liệt located just south of Hanoi,⁵⁰ points out that the Vietnamese Government, after it came to power in 1945, attempted to implement a “new culture”.⁵¹ This attempt was not able to be pursued until after 1954 although, according to Malarney, Hồ Chí Minh laid the groundwork in his 1947 publication “Correcting the Way We Work”.⁵² Malarney goes on to point out how:

⁵⁰ In present-day Vietnam, the three villages of Giáp Nhị, Giáp Tứ and Giáp Nhất, as well as the fourth village (now represented by a railway station) of Giáp Bát constitute parts of suburban Hanoi.

⁵¹ See Malarney’s discussion in Malarney 2002, pages 52-57.

⁵² Malarney, *Culture, Ritual and Revolution*, page 54.

officials considered pre-revolutionary practices [in funerary rituals, and rituals associated with death anniversaries] to be both ‘wasteful’ (*lãng phí*) and to provide contexts for ostentatious (*khoe danh, phô trương*) display and status competition. This was particularly true of feasting and its associated exchange relations. The new rites were to be ‘economical’ (*tiết kiệm*) and emphasize unity.⁵³

This particular poster can then be seen as an early attempt to persuade the people to change their somewhat profligate habits in ritual celebrations and to engage the people, as a method of persuasion.⁵⁴

In the matter of defeating the enemy of ignorance frames 13 and 14 in the “after the *thi đua* campaign” series compare with frame 5 in the “before” series (see Illustration 6-15 on page 168). The translations here are:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>5 Để giết giặc dốt: cụ Ba chưa biết đánh vần. Bác Ty đã biết đọc quốc ngữ, cái Tuyết đã biết đánh vần...</p> | <p>5 To kill the ignorance enemy: Old Ba can not yet spell.⁵⁵ Uncle Snake can read modern characters, Little Snow already knows how to spell...</p> |
| <p>13 Để giết giặc dốt: trong chương trình 6 tháng, cụ Ba biết đọc chữ quốc ngữ, bác Ty biết làm tính đổ.</p> | <p>13 To exterminate the enemy of ignorance: in the 6-month plan, Old Ba can read the Vietnamese letters, Uncle Snake can solve mathematical problems.</p> |
| <p>14 Thành Xuân cái Tuyết biết làm tính công, biết địa dư Việt Nam.</p> | <p>14 Young Spring and Little Snow can add up, and they know about the geography of Vietnam.</p> |

The family is shown in these frames, and the honorifics used for the family members tell us something about their position in the family. Cụ Ba (Old Ba) is the oldest member and head of the family - he is the one who makes up the *thi đua* rules, and oversees the compliance of the other members. Bác Ty (Uncle Snake) is an older and respected male member of the family but is not as old as Cụ Ba. Thành Xuân (Young Spring - a male) and Cái Tuyết (Little Snow - a female) are the youngest members of the family, are probably not yet married, and will occupy the lowest positions in the family as shown on this poster. The poster takes us into the life and the internal relationships of a typical family in the northern area of Vietnam.

⁵³ Malarney, *Culture, Ritual and Revolution*, page 110.

⁵⁴ Malarney, *Return to the Past*, pages 229-230 describes the methods used to curtail excesses in death celebration festivals in the late 1950s, and points out (pages 238-242) that in the 1990s there has been a resurgence of more lavish spending on rituals, such as death anniversaries and village rituals.

⁵⁵ The sense here is probably “to write”.

In these images there is an amusing error which, I suspect, has been deliberately made as a joke, so as to draw the people in, to make them feel part of it, to reinforce the sense of normalcy working towards social validation, to promote harmony between the artist and the viewer. The joke is, in Frame 5, Uncle Snake is reading his “ABC” (that is, his “*i t*”), but it is upside down, as with Old Ba, who does not yet know how to read. The joke would only be apparent to readers who had already succeeded in defeating the ignorance enemy but would reinforce the sense of solidarity, the social validation, for those in the know.

It is suggested by Benoît Tréglodé that two *thi đua* campaigns were launched during the Resistance – the *thi đua ái quốc* campaign described above, launched in 1948, and the *phong trào thi đua xã hội chủ nghĩa* (socialist emulation) campaign, launched in early 1950.⁵⁶ There is no mention of the launch of a second *thi đua* campaign in either the complete works of Hồ Chí Minh or the Party documents for the first half of 1950,⁵⁷ however the Central Committee of the Communist Party decided in 1949 to change the emphasis of *thi đua* to incorporate *Thi đua chuẩn bị tổng phản công* (*thi đua* to prepare for a general counter offensive).⁵⁸ There was a change in emphasis in all of the *tuyên truyền* material, and in the approach of the leadership towards the peasantry from about 1950 onwards (see discussion on this matter in the next chapter) in a move away from nationalism towards an embrace of socialism.⁵⁹ There is no doubt that this changed the emphasis of the *thi đua* campaign and this is what has been observed by Tréglodé. In addition, it appears that some of his source material is from the archives of the old USSR and it is feasible that the Việt Minh painted their *thi đua* campaign in socialist terms to make it more acceptable in those quarters, particularly in 1950 as Chinese advisors began arriving in the northern provinces.⁶⁰ There was a major change in the concept of *thi đua*

⁵⁶ Tréglodé, *Heroes and Revolution in Vietnam*, p. 40.

⁵⁷ Hồ Chí Minh. *Toàn Tập*, 2nd edition, Vol. 6 (1950-1952) of 12. Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Chính trị Quốc gia, 1995, pp. 1-64.

Văn Kiện Đảng Toàn Tập. Vol. 11 (1950) of 54. Hà Nội: NXB Chính Trị Quốc Gia, 2001, pp. 1-339.

⁵⁸ *Văn Kiện Đảng Toàn Tập*. Vol. 10 (1949) of 54. Hà Nội: NXB Chính Trị Quốc Gia, 2001, pp. 247-249.

⁵⁹ There was much discussion about what preparations were necessary for launching the General Counter Offensive at the Third Plenum of the Party from 21 January to 3 February 1950. See *Văn Kiện Đảng*, Vol. 11, pp. 19-219. Much of this centred on the need for a move towards more awareness of class issues.

⁶⁰ See Tréglodé, *Heroes and Revolution in Vietnam*, p. 56. Tréglodé also points out that Hồ Chí Minh and Trần Đăng Ninh were in Moscow in January 1950 for discussions between the Soviets and the Chinese. *Thi đua* had to be reformed to retain the economic, military and diplomatic support of the Communist bloc.

over the last two years of the Resistance War when the word began to acquire a new class-centred face as socialism began to replace patriotic nationalism as a driving force in the mobilisation campaigns. This shift in the meaning attached to *thi đua* was affirmed at a major meeting held in Tuyên Quang early in 1952.⁶¹

In any case, the *thi đua* campaign (or campaigns) continued right through the Resistance Against French Colonialism and the concept is still used in contemporary Vietnam, for example, in schools where it is common to see the slogan *Thi đua, Dạy Tốt – Học Tốt* “Cooperatively compete, Teach well – study well”, and some works are still being published about the topic.⁶² From 1948 onwards, much of the propaganda has some reference to *thi đua*, even if the subject of the material is not directly concerned with competition or cooperation. For example, a 1950 poster from Tuyên Quang celebrating Hồ Chí Minh’s fiftieth birthday shows children shouting *thi đua* slogans, such as *thi đua học* (“compete cooperatively in study”) although the poster is celebratory and not concerned directly with competition. The Vietnamese concept of *thi đua* (or “emulation”, if we are to give it its conventional translation, with which I disagree) is different to the concept of emulation as expounded in Chinese propaganda. For example, it is unlike the Chinese use of the soldier, Lei Feng, whose selfless dedication to duty and the Party (his greatest desire in life was to be nothing more than “a revolutionary screw that never rusts”), as one to be emulated by all young people.⁶³ This particularly Vietnamese concept of *thi đua*, originating during the first half of the Resistance War Against French Colonialism, has proven resilient and has become a standard part of the ideological apparatus of the Vietnamese Government to this day, albeit often treated as meaningless ritual.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Christopher Goscha, “A ‘Total War’ of Decolonization? Social Mobilization and State-Building in Communist Vietnam (1949-54)”, *War & Society*, vol. 31, no. 2 (August, 2012): 136-162, pp. 148-149.

⁶² Personal observations at schools in Vietnam. See also Lê Quang Thiệu, *Chủ tịch Hồ Chí Minh với Phong trào Thi đua Yêu Nước*. Hanoi: NXB Thanh Niên, 2008.

⁶³ See Stefan Landsberger, *Chinese Propaganda Posters - From Revolution to Modernization*. Amsterdam and Singapore: The Pepin Press BV, 2001, p. 11 for an example of an undated Lei Feng poster. Christopher Goscha notes that, after 1952, some Vietnamese heroes were portrayed in a similar manner to Lei Feng. See Goscha, *A ‘Total War’ of Decolonization*, p. 149.

⁶⁴ Personal observations.

Instructing the Villagers

Some of the mobilisation material was used to provide instruction on how to deal with situations in which people found themselves during the Resistance Against French Colonialism and it tends to be straightforward instructional material, eschewing the use of verse forms. An example is shown at Illustration 6-16 from Cao Bằng in 1947. The heading is “Taking Precautions”, against aerial bombardment and against paratroopers. There are eight frames, the last one has been signed by the artist “Quảng” and the whole poster is apparently number 4 in a series, the rest of which seem to have been lost. Unlike some of the text in the posters reviewed earlier, this poster has no text in verse form. The first frame sets the scene and explains the problem:

1. *Địch luôn luôn tìm cách phá chúng ta. Nếu ta sơ ý một chút là nó chui vào. Vì vậy các việc canh phòng phải hết sức cẩn thận. Thà chịu khó nhọc còn hơn chịu tổn thất về sau.*

1. The enemy is always seeking ways to harm us. If we overlook one little thing they will slip in. That is why all of the defence works must be done with utmost care and effort. Better to take pains now than to suffer damage afterwards.

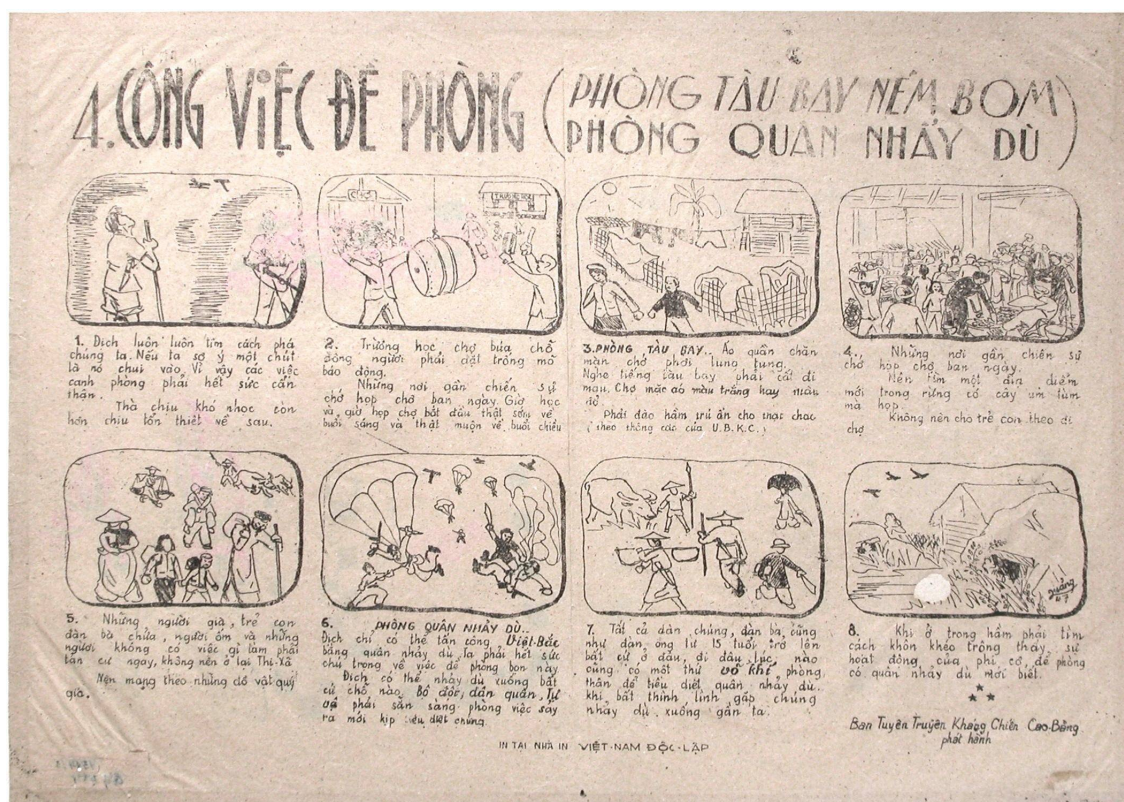


Illustration 6-16: Taking Precautions Against Air Warfare. DSCN0348, 918, Gy127.

The problem addressed in the poster is aerial warfare by the French colonists against the Vietnamese population and the frames give advice about what to do in various situations. The intended audience is obviously the village people, because the topics are all to do with village concerns. The first four frames warn villagers not to hold schools or markets in the day-time but, instead, to use very early morning or the cover of dark for these activities. Villagers are also warned not to leave their clothes “helter-skelter” on the hedgerows to dry, as they then become targets for the bombers.

The last four panels are urging people, young and old, children, women and those who are ill, to evacuate the towns. Leave nothing for the colonists to find, nor people to be drafted. They are also urged to attack paratroopers as they land and to build shelters against bombing. Frame 7 is shown at Illustration 6-17 and is interesting in its depiction of village stereotypes. The text of this panel reads:

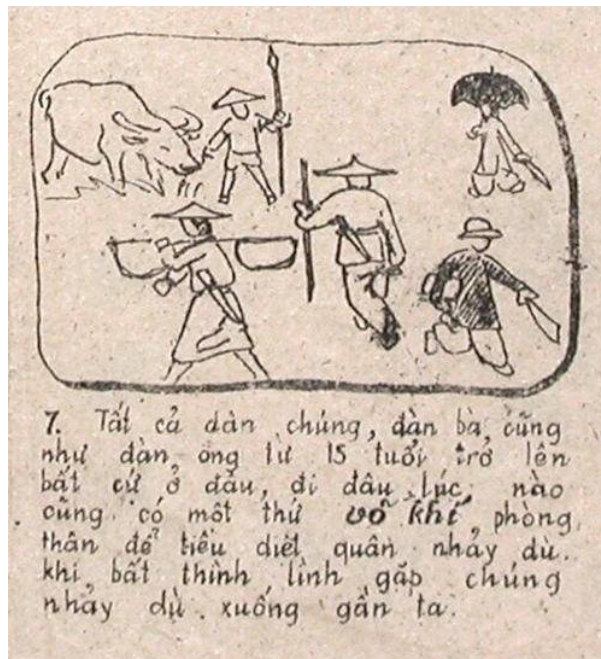


Illustration 6-17: Frame 7 of Aerial Warfare Precautions

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>7. Tất cả dân chúng, đàn bà cũng như đàn ông từ 15 tuổi trở lên bất cứ ở đâu, đi đâu lúc nào cũng có một thứ vũ khí, phòng thân để tiêu diệt quân nhảy dù. Khi bất thành linh gặp chúng nhảy dù xuống gần ta.</p> | <p>7. All of the people, women as with men from 15 years old and above, wherever they may be, going anywhere and at any time have some kind of weapon, as protection and to kill paratroopers. As when you unexpectedly meet with paratroopers descending close to us.</p> |
|---|---|

The panel has a bit of a “Dad’s Army”⁶⁵ feel about it, in that all members of the population are going around ready to face a threat, that is unlikely to eventuate, while armed with weapons that will be ineffective against any real enemy, who would arrive carrying guns and would soon be backed up by well-equipped land forces. However taking part in this particular “Home Guard” makes people feel that they are part of a larger story, together facing what was at the time, a very real threat.

The figures shown in Illustration 6-17 represent various inhabitants of a typical village busily going about their affairs. The farmer, with the buffalo as his symbol, the trader with her *dòn gánh* as the symbol of her trade, the young woman symbolised by her umbrella and *áo dài*-like garment, the scholar, symbolised by his black cloak, and the village defender or soldier, with two weapons (pike and dagger). All of the weapons are village implements pressed into service for that task. Although, in an actual conflict, these weapons would be of limited use, the poster serves its purpose in portraying a newly-confident population, ready to defend itself against the former overlord.

Instructions about the Purpose and Conduct of the Resistance

One of the posters from Lạng Sơn Province, circulated in 1949 and shown at Illustration 6-18, shows the viewer the main purposes of the Resistance and, incidentally, conveys the most common themes in the propaganda (apart from *thi đua*, perhaps surprisingly). The signature on the poster is indistinct, it may be *Tám Dêu* or *Tám Đêu* or similar, and it illustrates, with small drawings, ten points about the Resistance. The text associated with the pictures is as follows:

⁶⁵ *Dad’s Army* was a BBC comedy TV program which ran from 1968 to 1977. It was based on the creation of civilian forces called “Local Defence Volunteers” (the name later changed to “Home Guard”) in Britain during World War II, the units being composed of men who were too old (or too young) to join the formal military forces. The TV series was a fictional account of one such group. See Graham McCann. *Dad’s Army: The Story of a Classic Television Show*. UK: HarperCollins, 2001.

Mười Điều Kháng Chiến

- 1 Kháng Chiến
để dành quyền sống. Thề quyết không
làm nô lệ.
- 2 Du Kích
quấy rối địch không để địch ăn yên ở yên.
- 3 Dân Quân
canh gác đề phòng, Việt gian, giúp việc
vận tải tiếp tế, phá hoại, cứu thương.
- 4 Đề Phòng
phòng địch, phòng gian giữ bí mật: không
biết không nghe, không thấy.
- 5 Giao Thông
ta biết rõ địch một cách nhanh chóng thì
ta thắng.
- 6 Tàn Cư
thề không đội trời chung với quân cướp
nước.
- 7 Tăng Gia Sản Xuất
để kiên quyết kháng chiến giành độc lập
hoàn toàn.
- 8 Tuyên Truyền
để toàn dân cùng hăng hái kháng chiến
đến thắng lợi.
- 9 Cán Bộ
làm việc với dân, làm việc cho dân.
- 10 Đại Đoàn Kết
độc lập thống nhất, nhất định thành công.

Ten Points About the Resistance

- 1 Resistance
To secure the right to live. Resolutely
swear not to be enslaved.
- 2 Guerillas
Harass the enemy, don't let him eat in
peace or live in peace.
- 3 Auxiliaries
Watch out for and take precautions
against traitors, help with transport of
supplies, sabotage, and first aid.
- 4 Security
Protect against the enemy, prevent spies,
keep secrets: don't know, didn't hear,
didn't see.
- 5 Communications and Transport
Know clearly the enemy and we will
quickly win.
- 6 Evacuate the Towns
We vow not to share the same sky with
the troops who have robbed our country.
- 7 Increase Production
So as to firmly resist, and secure
complete independence.
- 8 Propaganda
So that all of the people together resist
enthusiastically, until victory.
- 9 Cadres
Work with the people, work for the
people.
- 10 Great Unity
Independence and unification, a certain
success.

These same ten points are also covered in a *Việt Minh* discussion paper, issued in Interzone IV and written on 25 August 1948.⁶⁶ The concept of *thi đua* is not mentioned in the discussion paper either, although the concept had been launched some two months previously.

⁶⁶ See *Mười vấn đề kháng chiến*. [Ten Matters about the Resistance]. Liên Khu IV: Sở Thông Tin Liên Khu IV, 1948 (available from the National Library of Vietnam).



Illustration 6-18: Ten points about the Resistance. DSCN0347, 917/Gy126.

The general intention of the *Mười Điều* poster is to communicate roles and strategies of the Resistance and to include the whole community in a common purpose. The first three themes – resistance, guerrillas and auxiliaries – refer directly to the military campaign of the Resistance. General Võ Nguyên Giáp, looking back at the Resistance from 1959, emphasises that it involved all of the people:

In the war of liberation in Viet Nam, guerilla activities spread to all the regions temporarily occupied by the enemy. Each inhabitant was a soldier, each village a fortress, each Party cell [and] each village administrative committee a staff.⁶⁷

He goes on to point out that, unlike other countries, Vietnam, in the first years of the conflict, could not engage in pitched battles, but “had to rest content with guerilla war”.⁶⁸ Hence propaganda posters supporting the *du kích* (“guerillas”) and the *dân quân*

⁶⁷ Võ Nguyên Giáp (1959). “People's War People's Army”, in *People's War People's Army*, pp 39-64. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961, p. 48.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 49.

(“auxiliaries” - but see below for further comments on this) were produced and circulated. Giáp points out that, from guerilla warfare, the campaign moved “into a form of mobile war” and “finally coming to greater campaigns bringing into play many regiments, then many divisions to end at Dien Bien Phu where the French Expeditionary Corps lost 16,000 men of its crack units”.⁶⁹

In 1949, when this poster was made, the Vietnamese regular army had been formed, but it was still reliant upon guerillas and the auxiliaries for some activities. The first frame shows a soldier in the evolving army, and the text echoes Hồ Chí Minh’s call to his countrymen at the start of the Resistance on 20 December 1946 “Never shall we be enslaved”.⁷⁰ The theme of the soldier in the Army occurs regularly in the propaganda, with many appeals to sew clothes for the soldiers as seen in Illustration 6-3 (page 153) and Illustration 6-4 (page 154), particularly for the winter campaigns, and support for a “general counter offensive” (*tổng phản công*). Talk of a general counter offensive is common in the *tuyên truyền* from 1949. A number of Việt Minh attacks took place in the summer of 1950 and, evaluating one such series along the northern border of Vietnam, William Duiker comments “In retrospect, the autumn [1950] border offensive seems to have marked a decisive shift in the course of the war. Badly mauled by the enemy, the French decided to evacuate the entire inland section of the border zone”.⁷¹ This is the kind of “general counter offensive” which the Việt Minh was building towards from about the end of 1950, although it suffered some reverses in the later phases of the war, and never really eventuated.

Between 4 March 1947 and 1 August 1947, Trường Chinh published, in *Sự Thật* (“The Truth”) newspaper, a series of articles about how the Resistance against the French must be fought - this series was republished as a booklet called *Kháng Chiến nhất định thắng lợi* (*The Resistance Will Win*) in September 1947 and has been further republished in Vietnamese, English and French several times since then.⁷² In the articles, Trường Chinh

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 49.

⁷⁰ Hồ Chí Minh (1946). “Appeal for Nation-wide Resistance”, translated by the publisher, in *Hồ Chí Minh: Selected Writings (1920-1969)*, p 68. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1973, p. 68.

⁷¹ William J. Duiker. *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, 2nd edition. Boulder: Westview, 1996, p. 152.

⁷² See Trường Chinh (1947). “The Resistance Will Win”, in *Trường Chinh: Selected Writings*, pp 83-211.

Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977, and Trường Chinh. *Kháng* ...continued on page 178

analyses Vietnam's political situation and the strategic environment for the Việt Minh within Vietnam. He discusses the military situation and puts it alongside wider strategic and philosophical issues discussing such matters as when it may be appropriate to attack and when better to tactically retreat. He recognises that the resistance forces were weak (in 1947) and introduces the three types required:

In order to ensure the success of the war of resistance we must have strong armed forces. In the present initial stage, our people's armed forces comprise only two categories: the regulars (*quân chính quy*) and the militia (*dân quân*). The latter is divided into two categories: the guerilla militia (*dân quân du kích*) and the self-defence militia (*dân quân tự vệ*). But later these forces may comprise the following branches: the main-force units (*quân chính quy* [and later called *quân đội chủ lực*]), the regionals (*bộ đội du kích địa phương*) and the militia (*dân quân tự vệ* [and later called *dân quân du kích*]). In our regular forces several branches will gradually take shape: infantry, artillery, engineers, etc. In future we shall have different armed services: army, navy, air force and others. We are building our forces in the 20th century and must take this into account in our calculations.⁷³

These terms and functions occur regularly in the mobilisation and educational material emanating from the Việt Minh as the resistance is explained to the people.

The *Mười Điều* poster of Illustration 6-18 gives us an insight into the work and perceptions of the branches of the forces used in the Resistance at the time of the poster's production and illustrate Trường Chinh's points about the types of forces and their development as the Resistance wore on. *Du kích* ("guerillas") are engaged in small-group military activities, such as sniping at enemy soldiers, making the roads unsafe for them, and disrupting their day-to-day activities ("not letting them sleep or eat in peace" as the text has it). *Dân quân* ("auxiliaries" or "militia") have a different function. The poster depicts them doing *phá hoại*, or "sabotage" to buildings and installations that otherwise would be of use to the enemy after the population has been evacuated. Although this particular poster makes a clear distinction between the *du kích* and *dân quân*, some statements by leaders tend to mix their functions. For example, Hồ Chí Minh, in his address to the National Congress of Militiamen (*dân quân*) in April 1948, makes no

chiến nhất định thắng lợi, 7th printing. Hanoi: Nxb Sự Thật, 1947.

⁷³ Trường Chinh, *The Resistance Will Win*, page 191. The Vietnamese words are from Trường Chinh, *Kháng Chiến nhất định thắng lợi*, page 103. Those phrases labelled "later called..." are from the footnote in Trường Chinh, *Kháng Chiến nhất định thắng lợi*, page 103, that is from a later edition.

distinction between them, referring to *dân quân du kích*, as he appeals for better co-ordination with the National Defence Army (*Vệ quốc quân*), for more work on self-supply and self-sufficiency (*tự cấp tự túc*), and less adventurism in seeking attacks on large enemy targets.⁷⁴ In addition to these two armed units, there was also a very large number of *dân công*, workers who helped the fighting units with transport and other vitally important tasks.

The *Mười Điều* poster is rich in symbolism. In frame 1 a soldier holds a rifle and is dressed in the padded vest shown being sewn in Illustration 6-3 (page 153) and also referenced in Illustration 6-4 (page 154), the worker with bulging muscles shown in frame 3 (a militiaman, part of the *dân quân*) occurs in a number of other propaganda posters and is often there as a protector of the village, although here he is destroying infrastructure as part of the “scorched earth” policy. The same muscular type occurs as a farmer in frame 7. The use of the “*i t*” as a symbol of learning was discussed earlier, appearing in Illustration 6-5 (page 155) and Illustration 6-10 (page 163), and it occurs again here at frame 9, but now as part of the duties of a cadre (*cán bộ*) who must work both with and for the people.

Frame 4 is an interesting example of what may be called “governance”. The picture shows a security check-point and an official checking the papers of a passer-by. Although Hồ Chí Minh had set up a Government, based mainly on the Việt Minh, in September 1945, that Government was sorely tried as negotiations with the French wore on over 1946 and had trouble holding on to any power after hostilities broke out on 19 December 1946. Symbols of government and control became very important in holding the people together and in projecting legitimacy for the Việt Minh as a Government. Symbols of authority, such as taxation, security, production of currency, issuing postage stamps and administrative structures were important in establishing and sustaining this legitimacy, and one of the important administrative structures established by the Việt Minh was a nascent Education Department established after a Conference in 1950 – the proposed structure of the Department is shown in Appendix F.

⁷⁴ Hồ Chí Minh, *To the National Congress of Militiamen*, pp. 78-80.

Frame 10 echoes a theme mentioned many times in the propaganda discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, and that is the essential need for unity (*Đại đoàn kết* – great unity, in this case). For the *Việt Minh* this was a very important part of the strategy since the areas in which they had most influence, the *Việt bắc* was the area with the most diversity in ethnic composition of the population, and the *Việt Minh* soldiers needed to work with the local populations for food and transport. An account from a first-hand participant, the Head of the 174th Regiment, Đặng Văn Việt, in a battle along Highway Number 4 (between Lạng Sơn and Cao Bằng) in August 1949 gives a detailed account of how the army and the local populations worked together. Battle lines had been drawn and the Vietnamese forces were waiting for the French supply column moving food, ammunition and trucks to Cao Bằng to ambush them. Cadres were sent to find food from the local population for the ambushing troops:

...the cadres we sent for the job returned and reported that the population was also running out of food and many families already had to go into the forest to collect edible roots to replace rice. Nevertheless, the villagers offered even their seed rice and they husked their paddy and cooked the rice all night to make the rice balls for the army.⁷⁵

In the event, Regiment 174 was not detected by the French convoy until the ambush was successfully sprung with “more than 100 men [enemy soldiers] captured, 96 vehicles and three tanks and armoured personnel carriers destroyed”.⁷⁶ The appeal for national unity occurs in much of the propaganda and much of the “social proof” techniques used are directed towards this end. As Hồ Chí Minh wrote “in the long war of resistance, each citizen is a combatant, each village, a fortress”.⁷⁷

Although the close involvement and unity of the ordinary people was the key to the eventual success of the Resistance Against French Colonialism, the *dân công* transport and supply people, suffered greatly in assaults such as that on Route 4 discussed above.

Further attacks around and on Cao Bằng in 1950 followed decisions at the “All Country

⁷⁵ Đặng Văn Việt. *The Drama of the Colonial Highway N4 (1950): The first great victory of the Vietminh Army over the French Expeditionary Corps. (The border campaign 1950)*. (Originally published: Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1990). Hà Nội: Privately published, 2006, pp. 87-88. See also the later Vietnamese edition Đặng Văn Việt. *Đường Số 4 rực lửa*. Hà Nội: NXB Giáo Dục, 2007, pp.97-98.

⁷⁶ Đặng Văn Việt, *The Drama of the Colonial Highway N4*, p. 92.

⁷⁷ Hồ Chí Minh (1947). “Appeal issued after six months of resistance”, translated by the publisher, in *Hồ Chí Minh: Selected Writings (1920-1969)*, pp. 72-74. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1973, p. 73.

Plenum” (*Hội nghị toàn quốc*, 21 January to 3 February 1950)⁷⁸ and marked a fundamental change in tactics for the Việt Minh, a move away from reliance upon small-scale guerilla and ambush warfare, towards more conventional warfare. These battles taught the Việt Minh leadership much about waging war against a European power but the toll on the civilians, the *dân công*, was very high. For example, prior to the September 1950 battle for Cao Bằng the potential casualties had been estimated at around 2,000-2,500 and medical facilities were set up accordingly. In the event the casualty rate was around 30% of the 50,000 participants on the Vietnamese side, that is around 15,000 people died or were wounded.⁷⁹ Besides the change in tactics having a profound effect on army recruitment and deployment, it also had an effect on mobilisation techniques and possibly explains why most of the poster material which is the subject of this chapter pre-dates the 1950 battles in the Cao Bằng area.⁸⁰ Posters had limited persuasive effects in the face of such devastation and loss of life.

Quislings and Traitors – Keeping the Secrets

Keeping the location and movements of the Việt Minh forces and Vietnamese Government apparatus secret from French forces and spies was a continuing problem throughout the Resistance. Even as early as into the first few months of the northern Resistance beginning in 1947, it is reported that:

The enemy seemed to know that the Chương Mỹ - Quốc Oai area was the site of the Vietnamese central offices. In early March [1947], two enemy columns attacked Trúc Sơn and the Quốc Oai district centre. Amidst gun explosions, the leading bodies of the Resistance quietly moved away. At various times, enemy tanks and infantry were at only a few kilometres from President Hồ Chí Minh’s lodging.⁸¹

⁷⁸ For a summary of some of the important points of discussion at the Plenum, see Trường Chinh. *Hoàn thành: Nhiệm vụ chuẩn bị chuyển mạnh sang tổng phản công (Báo cáo đọc ở Hội nghị toàn quốc lần thứ III (21-1 - 3-2-1950))*: NXB Sự Thật, 1950.

⁷⁹ Christopher E. Goscha. “‘Hell in a Very Small Place’ Cold War and Decolonisation in the Assault on the Vietnamese Body at Dien Bien Phu”, *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2010): 201-223, pp. 211-212.

⁸⁰ There could be other reasons why my material becomes thinner after 1950. As discussed above, most of it comes from the Museum of the Revolution and the opportunities may not have been present for the Museum to collect material from this period.

⁸¹ Lê Kinh Lịch, ed., *The 30-Year War 1945-1975*, p. 102.

Two years later the battle for Highway Number 4, described on page 180, was almost lost because an informer (*Việt gian*) had gone to the French garrison at Thất Khê to report that there was a large Việt Minh force gathering for an ambush.⁸² In that case, the French response was to bomb and strafe the supposed Việt Minh positions prior to the convoy's departure (to little apparent effect). The problem of informers and spies was a difficult one for the Việt Minh because they worked under cover and, unlike the *ngụy binh* – Vietnamese who were in the French army – their motivation may not be based mainly on a desire for material reward. The *ngụy binh* required specialised propaganda techniques beyond the reach of ordinary cadres and were treated separately, the *tuyên truyền* designed specifically for the *ngụy binh* is not covered here.⁸³

Consequently calls to watch out for *Việt gian* and the need for secrecy occur in some of the *tuyên truyền* directed at the general population. A black-and-white poster from Tuyên Quang, produced in about 1950, and shown at Illustration 6-19 was used to urge people to be aware of the need for secrecy.⁸⁴

The poster has been signed “Lưu” but it is not known who this may have been, although the style of the figures in the cartoon frames is similar to that seen in other poster series which have no signature. The main text is:

⁸² See *ibid.*, p. 91.

⁸³ See, for example, *Công tác vận động ngụy binh và mấy ý kiến về việc phá tuyến mộ*. [Mobilising Soldiers Working for the Other Side and Several Ideas About the Task of Destroying Recruitment]. Hanoi: Tổng Cục Chính Trị for Cục Địch Vận, 1951 (available from the Vietnamese People's Army Library) and *Vấn Đề Tuyên Truyền Ngụy Binh*. NXB Vệ Quốc Quan L.K. III, 1950 (available from the National Library of Vietnam).

⁸⁴ The only copy of the poster available is in very poor condition, the paper is very thin and yellowing, there are some holes in it and, at some time, it has been pasted on to card. Some of the print is now illegible.



Illustration 6-19: *Keep the Secrets.* DSCN0988, 2025/Gy687

Giữ Bí Mật!

Keep the secrets!

Toàn dân thực hiện nhiệm vụ

Everyone do your duty

In the first cartoon frame a *Việt gian* (traitor) is imparting secrets to a Frenchman and the text is “oppose traitors” – the Frenchman here being symbolised by a beret, in other posters it is an outsize nose. In the second cartoon frame a grinning farmer is forcing a traitor to go to the security forces to be dealt with, and the text is “remove traitors”. All of the Vietnamese shown are supposed to be poor and rural, symbolised by their bare feet, whereas the Frenchman has sandals on his. The girl telling the viewer to keep the secrets, an urban ideal, is made attractive by means of the curl in the middle of her forehead and by the shape of the eyebrows, eyes and delicate fingers (compare the rough types in the cartoon frames) – this poster has been produced by a skilled artisan. I have not been able to discover the exact significance of the girl’s headdress, but I suspect that it is of a type used in one of the minority areas of the *Việt bắc*. The skill with which this poster has been drawn draws attention to the “art for art’s sake” versus “art for propaganda” debates which were discussed at some length in the previous chapter. Artists had several dilemmas, apart from that argument, another being the choice of a style able to influence the farming communities in which they were working. The artist who worked on this poster has used a sophisticated “city” style for the girl and a rougher one for the peasants and the spies.



Illustration 6-20: French Surrender - What to do? DSCN937, 2039/Gy701

On occasions (possibly rare) French soldiers could be persuaded to surrender or to defect, as shown in the poster at Illustration 6-20, which is directed to the Vietnamese peasantry and not to French soldiers. The poster is probably from 1948 and was most likely produced and distributed in Bắc Giang Province and it is one of the “instructional” posters with text that is not in verse form. It is unclear whether this poster would have been used to try to persuade the *ngụy binh* to defect, as part of a suite of materials directed to this purpose or would have been used to provide hope and encouragement to the local population. Most probably the latter, as the defecting soldier in the poster is definitely a

European, symbolised by the large nose. Other propaganda, in the form of pamphlets and slogans, urges *ngụy binh* to turn their guns around and kill the enemy and *tuyên truyền* designed to persuade French soldiers was in French as few Frenchmen could read Vietnamese.⁸⁵ The heading in this poster is *Những dấu hiệu hàng binh sang ta* (“Signs that a soldier is surrendering to us”) and the text discusses the signs to look for and what to do to help the soldier: 1) the butt of the rifle points skywards and the barrel down; 2) the barrel of the gun has a white rag on it; 3) the arms are folded across the chest. The more important part of the poster is the set of instructions as to what to do (and not do) with the surrendering soldier. It is explained that a few French soldiers realise that they are fighting a colonial war and want to surrender to the Vietnamese. When the villager meets a surrendering French soldier, they are to say “Stop!” and the soldier will stop and raise his hands. One villager is to guard him while another disarms the Frenchman and takes his papers. The villagers are not to kill the soldier but to take him to the Government offices, and are not to take his personal belongings, such as his watch, fountain pen, money and clothing. The respectful attitude advocated reflects Hồ Chí Minh’s statement to the people of the south after French attacks in Sài Gòn in September 1945 that “We must show the world that we are a civilized people, more civilized than the murderers and aggressors”.⁸⁶

Reports of the treatment of the French prisoners-of-war after the Điện Biên Phủ battle in May 1954 indicate that the reality of the treatment meted out in that situation was not quite so respectful and humane, Bernard Fall reporting that only 28.5 percent of French prisoners captured at Điện Biên Phủ were ever repatriated, the others presumably dying in custody or on the long march back to the Red River Delta area.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Bernard Fall’s estimates from Điện Biên Phủ are that deserters (largely Vietnamese and other non-French soldiers) comprised around twenty percent of the troops deployed in that battle. See Bernard B. Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu*. Philadelphia/New York: L. B. Lippincott Company, 1967, pp. 453 and 482.

⁸⁶ Hồ Chí Minh (1945). “To our fellow countrymen in Nam Bo”, translated by the publisher, in *Hồ Chí Minh: Selected Writings (1920-1969)*, pp. 57-58. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1973, p.58.

⁸⁷ Fall, *Hell in a Very Small Place*, p. 438.

The Military

One poster where the message is directed, not at the general community as were other posters discussed in this chapter, but to the soldiers of the army appeared as an insert into the National Defence Army newsletter number 10, issued some time in 1950⁸⁸ and is shown here in Illustration 6-21. This image appears to have been made after an episode of general retraining and re-organisation⁸⁹ within units of the regular Army and the implementation of a new “push forward”. The rectification shown here appears to foreshadow the major rectification campaigns of 1952, which were modelled on the Maoist rectification campaigns in China. The later campaigns were designed to provoke an individual “conversion experience” in each of the participants and a general politicisation of the army (and wider society), they were closely driven by Party cadres.⁹⁰ The poster shown here portrays the situation both before and after a retraining and reorganisation



Illustration 6-21. *Reorganisation and Retraining in the Army.* DSCN0933, 1956/Gy646.

⁸⁸ The actual date is uncertain. The Museum of the Revolution has only the year associated with the poster.

⁸⁹ It is possible that *rèn chỉnh* could be translated as “rectification”, or “training and rectification”.

⁹⁰ Goscha, *A 'Total War' of Decolonization?*, pp. 150-151.

campaign of 1949 or 1950. The images show several interesting things about attitudes in the army, attempts to change them as well as some features of army organisation.

In Frame 1 of this poster (detail shown in Illustration 6-22 below), the training and reorganisation is shown as attempting to change the soldiers' views of the masses. The text on the poster is quite unclear in places due both to the original quality of the poster, followed by storage which was sometimes less than satisfactory. However, frame 1 reads:

Trước rèn chỉnh

Từ chỗ khinh thường dân chúng
(đặc biệt Lào Hà)⁹¹

Before the training and reorganisation

From where [the troops] are
contemptuous of the masses
(especially in Lào Cai and Hà Giang)

Sau rèn chỉnh thứ 1

Đến chỗ có tư tưởng nhân dân chiến tranh
(đặc biệt Lào Hà)

After the first training and reorganisation

Accepting the concept of a people's war
(especially in Lào Cai and Hà Giang)



Illustration 6-22. Reorganisation and Retraining (Detail - Frame 1)

Of course, there is no indication as to whether the training and reorganisation (or rectification), and this poster, were successful in changing soldiers' attitudes but it does indicate the Army had a problem with the ordinary soldiers' perceptions and acceptance of the people who were not part of a professional army.

⁹¹ Lào Hà (Lào Hà in the poster) is a short phrase used to refer jointly to the two provinces of Lào Cai and Hà Giang. I do not know why it is "Lào" in the poster instead of "Lào" – it is possible that the diacritic did not survive the journey from original production to conservation in the Museum.

Frame 6 seems to indicate that there were problems associated with corruption before the retraining (see detail in Illustration 6-23 on page 188 and the translation of the text). In this particular frame there are a few features of visual interest. In the left-hand (“before”) drawing, the *Toà án binh* (“Military Court”) sign is back-to-front, indicating we are inside the court-room watching proceedings. In the dock are two (maybe three) characters wearing what appear to be French berets, and I take it that these represent artists or writers. In the right-hand (“after”) drawing these two artists walk free, drawing books under their arms, cigarettes in their mouths, while mice and spiders play on the dock. The military court is shown as “LK 10”, which most likely means *Liên khu* – Interzone (military and administrative district) 10, which includes the two provinces of Lào Cai and Hà Giang.⁹²

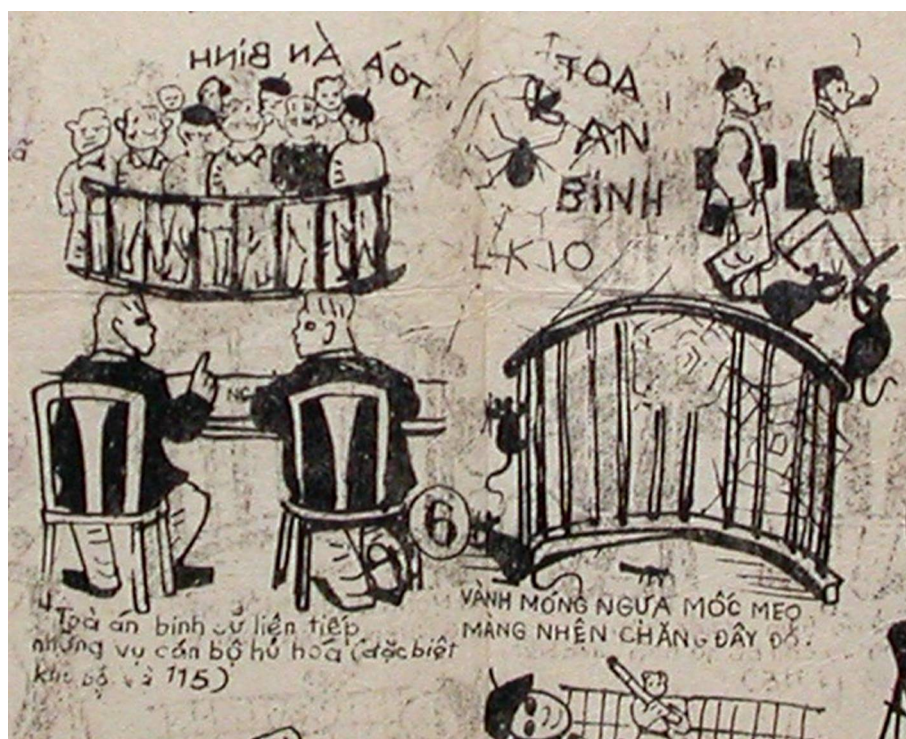


Illustration 6-23. Reorganisation and Retraining (Detail - Frame 6)

The text for the poster reads:

⁹² See Nguyễn Quang Ân. *Việt Nam. Những Thay đổi Địa danh và Giới Hành chính 1945-2002*. Hanoi: NXB Thông Tấn, 2003, pp. 53-54.

Trước

*Tòa án binh xử liên tiếp những vụ cán bộ
hủ hóa (đặc biệt khu bộ [illegible –
possibly và] 115)*

Before

The military courts try a succession of
corrupt cadres (especially at regional
headquarters 115)

Sau

*Vành móng ngựa mốc meo màng nhện
chăng đây đó*

After

The dock has grown mouldy, cobwebs
spreading here and there

(The “before” (left-hand side) and “after” (right-hand side) headings only occur in Frame 1, but seem to apply to each frame and so I have included them in the text. Some of the text is illegible). Before the retraining and reorganisation, it appears that there is a lot of corruption occurring - indeed, from the drawings, it appears that even the artists are involved.

The appearance of the people with berets is a further point of interest in this poster and I assume that they signify the artists or writers who worked with the Army (as mentioned above, berets were also used to signify French men, possibly artists). These little figures can give us some idea as to how the artists viewed their life and work in the Army. After the *Second National Congress of Culture* was held in June 1948 (discussed in Chapter 5) many artists and writers left the cities voluntarily to join the Resistance forces and many were attached to Army units. In Frame 2 of the poster an artist at work can be seen, drawing up a poster (he seems to be writing about guerilla war) and in Frame 6 the artists that were in the dock under the old system are shown, walking free, after the retraining and reorganisation.

Frame 5 of the poster (shown in Illustration 6-24) discusses the artists and writers directly - typewriters are used as symbols for the writers and clerks, as are berets for the artists. In the “before” part of the frame the artists and writers are shown working haphazardly, walking around smoking, lounging about (and note a signature device of the artist who drew this series of cartoons, that being the artist or writer with his head held to one side - see frames 5, 7 and 11). In the “after” portion of this frame, the artists and writers are lined up, being drilled by an intellectual “officer” (still wearing his beret) and discipline is tight, just like the regular army. We can only speculate about how artists and writers who were attached to the army would have reacted to this stricter organisation but

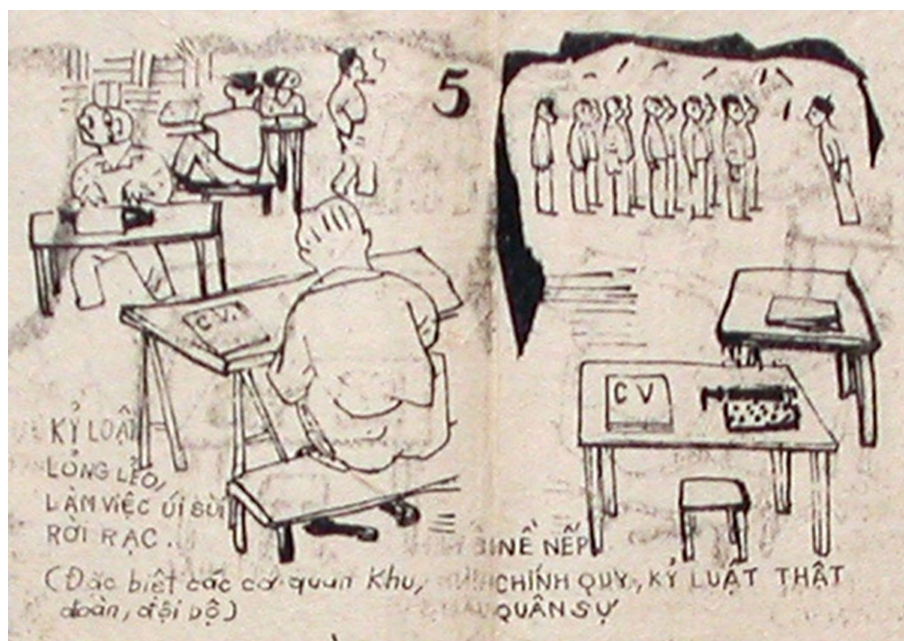


Illustration 6-24. Reorganisation and Retraining (Detail - Frame 5)

the person making this particular cartoon poster was one of those directly affected by the training and reorganisation. The text is not easy to decipher but it appears to be as follows (“CV” is most likely *công văn* - official correspondence, which suggests that administrative personnel were also being addressed in the poster):

Trước

*Kỷ luật lỏng lẻo, làm việc ứi sùi rời rạc.
(Đặc biệt các cơ quan khu, đoàn, đội
b[?]ộ)*

Before

Slack discipline, work rough, desultory
and uncoordinated. (Especially in the
army[?] area offices)⁹³

Sau

Nề nếp chính quy, kỷ luật thật quân sự

After

Regular order and discipline, real army
discipline.

The message is that if the army needs discipline then the artists and writers too must conform. Later frames show the value to the Army that accrues from a general increase in discipline and frame 7 shows how the army was formerly like a sick patient but has been transformed into a productive unit, frame 10 showing how the disciplined army can even fight off the “big-noses” (the French) with primitive weapons.

⁹³ The reference here is possibly also to regional administrative offices, as well as to military offices.

Summary

Chapters 3 and 4 showed techniques where *tuyên truyền* was successfully directed towards a largely illiterate population by use of poetry, aphorisms and song. This chapter has extended that discussion by showing how symbols, meaningful to the rural population of the *Việt bắc* were used in the visual *tuyên truyền* alongside the text material, much of which uses the techniques discussed earlier. There is evidence that professional writers and artists were employed in the production of the *tuyên truyền*, indeed one of the posters surveyed shows “artists” (the symbol is the beret) and “writers and clerks” (whose symbol is the typewriter) as closely associated with the army. In spite of what was seen as French duplicity in 1946, very little of the propaganda is overtly anti-French – the examples shown are more-or-less representative and Illustration 6-11 (page 163) is the only one with a hint of anti-French violence, and that is largely symbolic. As already discussed, the targets of the Resistance were the French colonisers (the *colons*) and not French people in general nor the French Government *per se*.

The producers of the *tuyên truyền* shown and discussed in this chapter were very well aware of symbols which would resonate with the rural people of the *Việt bắc* and many of these have been commented upon in the discussion above. Often, even the media used, the block prints for example, constitute meaningful symbols for the folk to whom the *tuyên truyền* is directed, as they are media familiar to the target audience and often part of their daily lives. Some of the power of the propaganda lies in the power of these symbols.

Chapter 7

Summing Up

It was pointed out in Chapter 1 that many ordinary people were deployed in the final assault on Điện Biên Phủ, most working as labourers transporting materiel and supplies for the regular People's Army. The *tuyên truyền* developed by the Việt Minh played a considerable role in explaining the Resistance Against French Colonialism to the populace, particularly in the *Việt bắc* and in arousing a sense of Vietnamese-ness, of Vietnam as a nation equal to the colonial overlord. Unlike the French, the Việt Minh could not attract soldiers with offers of high pay – the French had 1,901 paid Vietnamese soldiers fighting on their side at Điện Biên Phủ¹ – and had to attract support in other ways. Throughout the resistance war and before it, Việt Minh resources were scarce and the French colonial Government sought to cripple any attempts at governing, even to the extent of counterfeiting Việt Minh currency.² Thus it was incumbent upon the resistance forces to find imaginative ways to mobilise support from members of the population among whom they worked. However, as this thesis has shown, the development of mobilisation materials began long before Điện Biên Phủ and the approach to, and understanding of, mobilisation changed considerably over time.

***Tuyên truyền* Developed Over Time**

The Việt Minh's thought, work and resources in mobilising these people to take part in expelling the French from Vietnam can be dated back to the 1930s and included the agitation and propaganda work of the Indochina Communist Party (ICP) protesting against French commercial interests as covered in Chapter 2.

In this thesis I have discussed the motivational materials used by Vietnamese resistance propagandists from the 1930s to the late 1940s and showed that these materials – their aims, message and mode of delivery – changed considerably over time. The aims of mobilisation changed over time, those from the 1930s being markedly different in form

¹ Bernard B. Fall. *Hell in a Very Small Place: The Siege of Dien Bien Phu*. Philadelphia/New York: L. B. Lippincott Company, 1967, p. 481.

² Pierre Brocheux. "The Economy of War as a Prelude to a 'Socialist Economy': The Case of the Vietnamese Resistance against the French, 1945-1954", Chapter 10, in *Việt Nam Exposé: French Scholarship on Twentieth-Century Vietnamese Society*, pp. 313-330, edited by Gisele Bousquet and Pierre Brocheux. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002, p. 323.

and intent from the ones used in the 1950s. The changes occurred as the *Việt Minh* leaders became more experienced and as the situation, and the audience, changed. As is shown in Chapter 2, the motivational material from the 1930s consisted largely of *khẩu hiệu* or slogans, often derived from outside Vietnam. The 1930s material studied here shows a primitive stage of Vietnamese communist propaganda, the propagandists not even sure who they should talk to – the workers (perhaps two percent of the population), or the peasants. The materials were far from the Vietnamese reality, lacked a focus and the main inspiration came from outside Vietnam. Also, the aims of the 1930s material differed from that needed later and were to motivate action from workers who were presumed to be unhappy about working conditions and pay and to encourage them to join demonstrations or to go on strike to agitate for a change in their employment conditions. Most of this agitation and mobilisation material, which is analysed in Chapter 2, consists of simple slogans concerning working conditions of labourers appropriate to an employer-employee relationship such as in mines, plantations and factories.

From the 1940s onwards, the *tuyên truyền* took a completely new shape and came into a new stage. It seemed to be deeply rooted in the Vietnamese soil, derived mainly from Vietnamese sources and often in the form of posters, some designed to be used in classroom-like situations or village gatherings. The latter are discussed in Chapter 6. Between these two periods, newspapers and booklets were introduced and some of the important ones and their significance is discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. During the 1940s, the new material that appeared in the *tuyên truyền* often used appealing symbols that were familiar to the rural population, symbols related to a shared history and symbols from celebrations common in the *Việt bắc*, celebrations such as funerary and calendar events. There was much greater use of verse to establish points of discussion and areas of rapport with the peasantry. *Ca dao* became common, metaphors related to rural life were used in the verse and the connection with an implied audience drawn from farming folk became apparent. Songs were sung and posters appeared, that showed villagers striving to read and write, and a sense of change and the development of new opportunities was engendered.

Although the materials produced by the Việt Minh from about 1942 onwards were somewhat simplistically called *tuyên truyền* – or “propaganda” in English – it is more complicated and broader than the negative term “propaganda”, and had a life of its own. This difference between *tuyên truyền* and “propaganda” is discussed in Chapter 1. I argue that, first, the aims of this *tuyên truyền* were different from those of the *khẩu hiệu* of the 1930s and were more in the nature of providing information for people who had no other way of finding out about events and conditions elsewhere in the country, nor of the great events taking place in Europe, Russia and the rest of Asia during the 1940s. The reason for wanting to inform people about their place and their country’s place in the world was to enable them to see themselves in a wider context than the villages in which they lived and worked, and to encourage a sense of nation and a desire for independence. Other avenues for the rural population to gather news outside their immediate village environment were usually very limited.

Second, the aim of *tuyên truyền* becomes apparent in some of the later mobilisation materials produced once the Resistance war was raging from 1947 on, and that is to instruct people on such things as to how to avoid enemy aircraft, the need for secrecy, the need to increase food production to feed the army, and so on. Third, the aim in this material was to build a sense of solidarity among the villagers and a sense of connection between the peasantry (the majority of the people) and the army, who were to be seen to be fighting on behalf of the general population. People were to be motivated by a sense of nationalism and patriotism and were to provide food, warm clothing and other supplies for the army.

In the later stages of the Resistance campaign the aims of the *tuyên truyền* changed yet again as new realities forced themselves upon the Việt Minh leadership. From about 1950 and the general counter offensive onwards, the reality was that “many a peasant – too many by early 1953 – did not want to take part in this increasingly deadly conflagration putting them at the mercy of some of the most lethal industrial weapons of the twentieth century”.³ It was from this period on that the new methods were particularly

³ Christopher Goscha. “A 'Total War' of Decolonization? Social Mobilization and State-Building in Communist Vietnam (1949-54)”, *War & Society*, vol. 31, no. 2 (August, 2012): 136-162, p. 146.

needed to face this new situation and mobilisation techniques were copied from those used successfully by the Communist Parties of the USSR and China.

What Drove the Changes?

Hồ Chí Minh deserves much of the credit for teaching Việt Minh cadres how to produce effective *tuyên truyền*, skills which he honed while he was living among the rural population in northern Thailand from mid-1928 to December 1929⁴ and in the northern region of Vietnam near Cao Bằng in the early 1940s. From my study of *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập*, *Lịch sử Nước Ta* and *Việt Minh Ngũ Tự Kinh* it is clear that Hồ Chí Minh was the main driving force in the redirection of *tuyên truyền* during the 1940s. In the 1930s, most of the propaganda that was used did not address the Vietnamese situation specifically. It tended to address “universal” concerns regarding employment conditions and tried (unsuccessfully and sporadically) to introduce watchers and listeners to international movements and ideals, particularly to communism and socialism. However, the *tuyên truyền* that Hồ Chí Minh introduced during the 1940s was very different. It was used to construct a new reality in the *Việt bắc*, it was aimed at introducing a national entity, a Vietnam that was unified and was beyond the village of everyday experience, yet still belonged to the farmers of the *Việt bắc*. It aimed to arouse feelings of nationalism, of pride in a nation with a long history and an independent future and an actor on the world stage. Similar work was produced in the later 1940s with more of an emphasis on the peasant culture of the *Việt bắc* and, when the inevitable move was made from guerrilla warfare to a more conventional large-scale warfare utilising a standing army, the hope of the Việt Minh leadership was that some of the more necessary and coercive measures, such as conscription would be more generally acceptable.

In a later period, once full-scale resistance to colonialism had broken out, artists and writers were co-opted or willingly volunteered their time and talents to the cause of the Resistance. Trường Chinh, General Secretary of the Vietnamese Workers’ Party (the

⁴ See Christopher E. Goscha. *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolution, 1885-1954*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press for the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 1999, pp. 76-77.

name used by the Communist Party), in his address to the 1948 Cultural Conference, pointed out the necessity of being responsive to the audience for writers and artists:

What is essential is to live among the masses of the people, ... to let one's heart beat in harmony with the heart of the nation; to share in its joys and sorrows, to labour and fight with the people and to share their faith and hatred.⁵

He was writing with the experiences of the 1940s *tuyên truyền* behind him and this lesson of “responsiveness to the audience” was one taught by Hồ Chí Minh as he developed *tuyên truyền* during the early 1940s. The developers of the persuasive material first used in 1940s, and later refined during the Resistance, recognised the importance and the effectiveness of using commonly recognised community symbols, of referring to village life and being deeply among the people. Village symbols which were heavily used included animals such as toads and buffalo, village activities such as weaving and sewing, ceremonies and songs, particularly the *ca dao*, which is a song form special to Vietnam.

An important aspect of the *tuyên truyền* which is studied here is the developing understanding of the relationship between *tuyên truyền* and art. Trường Chinh's *Theses on Vietnamese Culture* of 1943 (discussed in Chapter 5 and translated as Appendix G) called for a new national and nationalist understanding in Vietnamese art and literature. In 1948 he again considered the arts but this time in relationship to the propaganda task:

...we can say that there are propagandists who are not yet artists, and that there are no artists that are in no way propagandists.⁶

He is suggesting here that all art contains some message which can be characterised as propaganda, in that it is aimed at putting a point of view to its audience. His assertion is amply illustrated by the way in which the French view of the world was taught to Vietnamese artists as part of their training from the time the education system was first put in place:

Until 1925, art in Vietnam was largely created in the service of the pagoda, temple or village community. In that year the French colonial government set up an 'Ecole Supérieure des Beaux-Arts' in Hanoi. ... Its attitude to

⁵ Trường Chinh (1948). “Marxism and Vietnamese Culture (Report delivered at the Second National Cultural Conference, July 1948)”, in *Trường Chinh: Selected Writings*, pp. 213-296. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977, p. 290.

⁶ Trường Chinh, *Marxism and Vietnamese Culture*, p. 284.

art was deeply conservative, following the precepts of the French Academy and largely ignoring the more revolutionary ideas being promulgated about art in Europe at that time.

...There is little evidence of a challenge to the existing order, political or artistic, in works from the period leading up to the Second World War.⁷

Architecture, in particular, offered the opportunity for an artist of the colonial regime to become a propagandist for the French colonialists:

Again, French colonial architecture was about power and appearances. The ground floor was reserved for common areas, with all the kitchen areas, laundry rooms, servants' quarters and other more "practical" areas pushed to the back. The facades were colorful and geometrically shaped to better exude an aura of benevolent self-confidence⁸

In fact, some of these classically trained students were to finish up in the Resistance movement and to produce some fine examples of *tuyên truyền* for the *Việt Minh*.⁹ As discussed in Chapter 5, Vietnamese artists in the late 1940s saw their role as playing a leading part in the mobilisation and *tuyên truyền* effort and many of them lived among the people of the *Việt bắc* and produced their work there, some of which has been discussed in previous chapters.

From Nationalism to Socialism

The *Việt Minh* leaders knew all along that it was unlikely that posters and slogans alone, no matter how cleverly embedded within the culture to which they are directed, would persuade people to lay down their lives for a cause. As far back as March 1947, a few months into the Resistance, Trường Chinh recognised this, writing in his *The Resistance Will Win*:

...if we want all the people to take part in the resistance in every field, verbal political propaganda alone is not enough. We should strive to improve the living conditions of the people...¹⁰

⁷ Fiona Kerlogue. *Arts of Southeast Asia*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2004, p. 192.

⁸ Catherine Noppe and Jean-François Hubert. *Art of Vietnam*. New York: Parkstone Press, 2003, p. 185.

⁹ See, for example, the series entitled *Xã Đoàn Kết vượt khó khăn* in Triều Văn Hiền, Trần Hải Nhị, Lê Thị Thúy Hoàn and Ngô Thị Ba (Compilers). *9 Năm Kháng Chiến Qua Tranh Tuyên Truyền Cổ Động* [9 years of resistance war through propaganda paintings and posters], translated by Lê Thị Thúy Hoàn. Hà Nội: SAVINA for Bảo tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2007, pp. 113-126.

¹⁰ Trường Chinh (1947). "The Resistance Will Win", in *Trường Chinh: Selected Writings*, pp. 83-211. (Originally published: as articles in *Sự Thật*, numbers 70 to 81, 4 March to 1 August 1947). Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977, p. 207.

As the war against the French progressed, the inadequacy of *tuyên truyền* alone became more apparent and two important changes in mobilisation policy took place. First, there was a call in January-February 1950 by Trường Chinh for a general mobilisation as the Việt Minh prepared for a change from guerrilla tactics towards more conventional warfare known as the “general counter offensive”. In setting out the 10 actions that he saw as needing to be undertaken in preparation for the general counter offensive, Trường Chinh set out as his point three:

Muốn thế [tổng phản công], chương trình công tác năm nay phải gồm điểm dưới đây:

...

3 – *Tổng động viên nhân lực, vật lực, tài lực và tinh thần của toàn dân theo khẩu hiệu “tất cả cho tiền tuyến, tất cả để chiến thắng”;*¹¹

If we want that [a General Counter Offensive] the mission program for this year must include the points below:

...

3 – General mobilisation of the work force, resources, intellectual power, and the courage of the people, according to the slogan “*all for the front lines, all for victory*”;

A general mobilisation law was promulgated by the Government on 12 February 1950 resulting in mobilisation of the population in the areas controlled by the Việt Minh and the conscription of many young men into the People’s Army.¹² A “National Information Congress” held on 5 April 1950 examined the propaganda needs of the General Mobilisation.¹³ A revitalised *thi đua* campaign was to be introduced and the General Mobilisation (*Tổng Động Viên*) was to be linked in the public mind to the forthcoming General Counter Offensive (*Tổng Phản Công*) which was to finally drive the French from Vietnam.¹⁴ There was obviously some doubt about the ability of the existing cadre force to be able to take on a *tuyên truyền* campaign of the magnitude necessary for General Mobilisation without a serious effort at further training and education and the same

¹¹ Trường Chinh. *Hoàn thành: Nhiệm vụ chuẩn bị chuyển mạnh sang tổng phản công (Báo cáo đọc ở Hội nghị toàn quốc lần thứ III (21-1 - 3-2-1950))*: NXB Sự Thật, 1950, pp. 28-29.

¹² Christopher Goscha. “A 'Total War' of Decolonization? Social Mobilization and State-Building in Communist Vietnam (1949-54)”, *War & Society*, vol. 31, no. 2 (August, 2012): 136-162, pp. 142-143.

¹³ See File number PTT 2755 held in the Vietnam National Archives Number III, pp. 26-40. This file has been poorly reconstructed and the pages are out of logical order. Here I use the pencilled numbers at the top of each page.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 31.

Congress paid close attention to the education and training of cadres that was necessary if a major *tuyên truyền* effort was to be mounted.¹⁵ There were plans to send suitable cadres abroad for study, to open *tuyên truyền* schools at each administrative level and to produce a professional book on *tuyên truyền* techniques.¹⁶ Besides a revitalised *thi đua* campaign and the start of land reform, Christopher Goscha mentions that a “new heroes” campaign¹⁷ and “rectification” campaigns were introduced.¹⁸ My Chapter 6 discusses the *tuyên truyền* material for a rectification campaign in the military in detail and points to a need to broaden soldiers’ perceptions of minority groups and to obey orders more faithfully. This particular rectification campaign also seemed to involve artists and writers who were part of the army, probably involved in production of *tuyên truyền*.

The second change in mobilisation techniques arose from a perceived need to speed up the implementation of long-promised land reform and give “land to the tillers”. In March 1951 Trường Chinh addressed a congress of the Liên Việt (National United Front of Vietnam – more-or-less a simple change of name from “Việt Minh”) and covered the question of socialism and land redistribution. Land redistribution had been a burning question for peasants for years and there was much anger and resentment at the unequal distribution of land, most of which had been in the hands of French colonists or wealthy Vietnamese landlords.¹⁹ Colonialism, and particularly the colonial taxation policies, had increased the disparity between rich and poor and driven many peasant families off their land and into poverty.²⁰ In spite of this problem being seen as urgent by many peasants, Trường Chinh in 1951 saw that a resolution had to be acknowledged, but postponed:

We are involved in class struggle. So long as society is divided into classes, there will be class struggle. But, in the face of our common enemies – the aggressors, the French imperialists and the US interventionists – ... all

¹⁵ See File number 2755, PTT in the National Archives Number III, pp. 53-60.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 54-55. I have been unable to discover if this book was ever prepared or published.

¹⁷ Goscha, *A ‘Total War’ of Decolonization?*, p. 149-150.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 150-152.

¹⁹ In a survey in the north of Vietnam, it was found that the richest 5.5% of households held 29.6% of the land and the poorest 56% held 12% of the land, see Edwin E. Moise. *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam: Consolidating the Revolution at the Village Level*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983, p. 150, and the situation was even more concentrated in the Mekong Delta, see Moise, *Land Reform in China and North Vietnam*, p. 148.

²⁰ See Samuel L. Popkin. *The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1979, pp. 153-158.

strata of our people, all revolutionary classes in our country are in the same position: they have no other way to safeguard their interests in a reasonable manner than to concentrate their forces on resisting the common enemy.²¹

In so saying, he has subsumed the question of land reform into that of socialist class struggle, the resolution of which must be put off in the face of the unity needed to achieve success in the struggle for independence. However, by 1953 the question could no longer be put off and the Party's position had changed. In a paper delivered at the First National Conference of the Vietnamese Workers' Party in 1953, Trường Chinh wrote:

*Thus in order to strengthen the people's democratic dictatorship, to consolidate our rear area, to suppress the counter-revolutionaries, to develop production, and ensure supplies to enable us to persist in and step up our patriotic fight, it is necessary to carry out the land reform, overthrow the feudal landlord class, and smash the social basis of imperialism in our country.*²²

As Goscha points out, "land reform ... spoke directly to the Vietnamese party's desire to attract, politicize, and move one singularly important social component: the Vietnamese peasantry".²³ Land reform had become a powerful mobilisation technique and promulgation about its progress another form of *tuyên truyền*. Goscha has the view that these mobilisation methods were adapted largely from Sino-Soviet experiences. There seems to be a remarkable difference between the 1950s and the 1940s, where my research is focussed. The earlier material of the 1940s which I collected does not show this influence for the mobilisation campaigns of this period, and such influence would become more apparent in the material from the 1950s. Wilfred Burchett witnessed the results of the land reform at first hand in one small place, and writes of the joy which he saw:

Thus I was present at a moving and historic ceremony when the peasants at Hung Son village ... marked the start of land reform by making a huge bonfire [at night] of the cadastral deeds and other documents that had enslaved them to the landlords for generations. ... The faces of the

²¹ Trường Chinh (1951). "The Party's Policy Concerning the National United Front (Speech delivered at the Congress of the National United Front, March 3, 1951)", in *Trường Chinh: Selected Writings*, pp. 453-464. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977, p. 458.

²² Trường Chinh (1953). "Implementing the Land Reform (Report delivered at the First National Conference of the Viet Nam Workers' Party (November 14-23, 1953))", in *Trường Chinh: Selected Writings*, pp. 465-556. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1977, p. 480. The emphasis is in the original and also in the Vietnamese, see Trường Chinh (1953). "Thực hiện cải cách ruộng đất", in *Trường Chinh Tuyển Tập*, Vol. 1 (1937-1954), pp. 607-630. Hanoi: Nhà xuất bản Sự thật for Viện Mác-Lênin, 1987, p. 622.

²³ Goscha, *A 'Total War' of Decolonization?*, p. 152.

peasants in the glow of the flames, devouring the symbols of their enslavement, was a study in itself.²⁴

Benedict Kerkvliet points out that “Both the national leadership and a large proportion of the peasantry [generally] wanted land reform” but that the leadership went further and introduced socialist measures, such as collective farming which very few of the peasants wanted, as part of the reorganisation of agriculture.²⁵ In the long run, by the 1980s, the collectivisation reforms were dismantled under “pressure ... from everyday practices of villagers in the Red River delta and other parts of northern Vietnam”.²⁶ The social forces that the *Việt Minh* were adept at harnessing were still shaping the political landscape many years later.

This thesis has examined *Việt Minh tuyên truyền* up to about 1950. The year 1950 saw significant changes to the course of the War of Resistance. On 1 October 1949 Mao Zedong proclaimed the People’s Republic of China after having defeated the nationalist forces, who were then forced to flee to Taiwan.²⁷ The example of the Chinese victory was watched carefully by *Việt Minh* leaders and influenced their future planning. As some of the *tuyên truyền* examined in this thesis has shown, although the Chinese had long been seen as potential invaders and enemies, the Communist Party’s success and the dominant ideologies brought the two together in a manner unprecedented in the last 2000 years. Pierre Brocheux points out that, while trade between people in the *Việt bắc* and China continued right through the resistance, by 1950 Chinese Government support for the *Việt Minh* was of a different kind and military equipment and training enabled them to leave guerrilla war behind and to engage in larger scale military attacks.²⁸ This changed the “art of war” for the *Việt Minh* and between 16 September and 14 October 1950, the *Việt Minh*

²⁴ Wilfred Burchett (Edited by George Burchett and Nick Shimmin). *Memoirs of a Rebel Journalist: The Autobiography of Wilfred Burchett*. Sydney: University of NSW Press, 2006, p. 429.

²⁵ Benedict J. Kerkvliet. *The Power of Everyday Politics: How Vietnamese Peasants Transformed National Policy*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005, p. 9.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 234.

²⁷ Immanuel C. Y. Hsü. *The Rise of Modern China*. New York, London and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 731.

²⁸ Pierre Brocheux. “The Economy of War as a Prelude to a ‘Socialist Economy’: The Case of the Vietnamese Resistance against the French, 1945-1954”, Chapter 10, in *Việt Nam Exposé: French Scholarship on Twentieth-Century Vietnamese Society*, pp. 313-330, edited by Gisele Bousquet and Pierre Brocheux. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002, p. 325.

fought the French in the northern area around Cao Bằng forcing them to abandon all fortifications on the northern border with China.²⁹ A later People's Army writer emphasised the fundamental changes that took place in the Army in 1950:

*Tóm lại, bước phát triển của nghệ thuật chiến dịch của ta trong chiến dịch Biên Giới Thu-Đông 1950 là bước phát triển nhảy vọt trên chặng đường dài, quá độ từ tác chiến du kích phân tán tiến lên tác chiến tập trung, quy mô từ nhỏ đến lớn của bộ đội ta trong kháng chiến chống Pháp.*³⁰

In summary, steps in developing our art of warfare in the Autumn-Winter campaign of 1950 *were development by rapid leaps along a long road of transition*, changing from fighting with scattered guerrillas rising to concentrated warfare, changing the normal [way of warfare] from small to large for our army in the resistance war against the French.

As a result of the 1950 border campaign, Trường Chinh is reported to have summed up the new situation by observing that “we are no longer encircled, a pathway to the world has now been opened for Vietnam. We now have a large and powerful ally at our side”.³¹ Before the 1950 campaign, in December 1949, Hồ Chí Minh went to China and in the following months about twenty thousand Việt Minh soldiers went to China for training and large amounts of armaments and materiel arrived from China for use by the Việt Minh.³² From that time on, the direction of Việt Minh warfare and the *tuyên truyền* associated with it changed.

²⁹ See Trần Văn Quang, ed. *Lịch sử Nghệ thuật Chiến Dịch Việt Nam trong 30 Năm Chiến tranh Chống Pháp, Chống Mỹ 1945-1975*, 2nd edition. Hanoi: NXB Quân Đội Nhân Dân, 1995, pp. 83-107, for Vietnamese commentary on the way in which the 1950 border campaign changed the concept of war for the Việt Minh.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 107.

³¹ Quoted in William J. Duiker. *Ho Chi Minh*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2000, p. 426.

³² *ibid.*, pp. 425-427.

Appendix A

Common Acronyms

Much of the Vietnamese-language materials produced during the period of the Resistance Against the French were used for instructions or reports, and contain acronyms. The acronyms are rarely spelled out in the original material and some of the common ones are listed in Table A-1. This list has been gleaned from original archival material from Vietnam and from some modern Vietnamese¹, English and French language publications.

Table A-1: Common Acronyms

Acronym	Vietnamese	English and explanation
BDHV	<i>Bình dân Học vụ</i>	Mass education (usually refers to the anti-illiteracy campaign).
BNV	<i>Bộ Nội vụ</i>	Department of the interior.
BTC	<i>Bộ Tài chính</i>	Department of finance.
BT VH	<i>Bổ túc văn hóa</i>	Supplementary education
CA	<i>Công an</i>	Security forces (police)
CBCNVC	<i>Cán bộ công nhân viên chức</i>	Civil service staff (public servant)
CBQLGD	<i>Cán bộ quản lý giáo dục</i>	Educational administration staff
CD	<i>Cao đẳng</i>	High level (training college)
CDSP	<i>Cao đẳng sư phạm</i>	High level pedagogy (teacher training)
CMC	<i>Chống mù chữ</i>	Anti-illiteracy
CNH	<i>Công nghiệp hóa</i>	Industrialisation
CNXH	<i>Chủ nghĩa xã hội</i>	Socialism
CSVC	<i>Cơ sở vật chất</i>	Material facilities
ĐH	<i>Đại học</i>	University, or other institute of higher learning
DTNT	<i>Dân tộc nội trú</i>	Ethnic boarding school
GD-ĐT	<i>Giáo dục – đào tạo</i>	Education and training (used in a general sense)
GDTX	<i>Giáo dục thường xuyên</i>	Continual education
HĐCP	<i>Hội đồng Chính phủ</i>	Government council (of ministers).
HĐH	<i>Hiện đại hóa</i>	Modernisation
HĐND	<i>Hội đồng nhân dân</i>	People's council
HĐND	<i>Hội đồng nhân dân</i>	People's council.
KTTH-HN-DN	<i>Kỹ thuật tổng hợp – hướng nghiệp – dạy nghề</i>	General engineering – vocational training – technical training

¹ For example, see Nguyễn Quang Kính, Đỗ Quốc Anh and Trần Minh Quốc, eds. *Giáo dục Việt Nam 1945-2005*. 2 vols. Vol. 1. Hanoi: NXB Chính trị Quốc gia, 2005, p. 16.

Acronym	Vietnamese	English and explanation
LK	<i>Liên khu</i>	Interzone, linking a number of provinces.
NGND	<i>Nhà giáo nhân dân</i>	People's teacher
NGUT	<i>Nhà giáo ưu tú</i>	Outstanding teacher
PCGD	<i>Phổ cập giáo dục</i>	Universal education
PCGDTH	<i>Phổ cập tiểu học</i>	Universal elementary education
PTCS	<i>Phổ thông cơ sở</i>	General foundation (education)
PTT	<i>Phủ Thủ tướng</i>	Office of the Prime Minister
PTTH	<i>Phổ thông trung học</i>	General middle-school education
QĐND	<i>Quân đội Nhân dân</i>	People's army
QH	<i>Quốc hội</i>	National Assembly
SDD	<i>Suy dinh dưỡng</i>	Malnutrition
SGK	<i>Sách giáo khoa</i>	Textbook
TDĐT	<i>Thể dục thể thao</i>	Physical education and sport
THCN	<i>Trung học chuyên nghiệp</i>	Secondary vocational school
THCN-DN	<i>Trung học chuyên nghiệp – dạy nghề</i>	Vocational and technical secondary school
THCS	<i>Trung học cơ sở</i>	Foundation secondary school
THPT	<i>Trung học phổ thông</i>	General secondary school
TTTT	<i>Thông tin Tuyên truyền</i>	Information and propaganda
TW	<i>Trung ương</i>	Central authorities
UBKCHC	<i>Ủy ban kháng chiến hành chính</i>	Resistance administration committee (one committee for each village, district, province, interzone).
UBKCHCCTNB	<i>Ủy ban kháng chiến hành chính các tỉnh Nam Bộ</i>	Resistance administration committee for the provinces in the south.
UBKHCNB	<i>Ủy ban kháng chiến hành chính Nam Bộ</i>	Resistance administration committee for the southern district.
UBKCKT	<i>Ủy ban kháng chiến kinh tế</i>	Committee for economic resistance
UBND	<i>Ủy ban nhân dân</i>	People's committee
VM	<i>Việt Nam Độc Lập Đồng Minh (Việt Minh)</i>	League for the independence of Vietnam.
VNDCCH	<i>Việt Nam Dân chủ Cộng hoà</i>	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
VTCT	<i>Vũ trang Tuyên truyền</i>	Armed propaganda.
XHCN	<i>Xã hội chủ nghĩa</i>	Socialist
XHHGD	<i>Xã hội hóa giáo dục</i>	Socialised education
XMC	<i>Xóa mù chữ</i>	Eliminate illiteracy

Names of other countries and cities when written in *quốc ngữ* have changed over the years and, when reading earlier material, it is not always obvious which country is being referred to. The list (ordered on the Vietnamese) given in Table A-2 is a compilation of modern names and the ones more likely to be encountered in the materials used for this thesis.

Table A-2: Country and City Names in Vietnamese

English	Vietnamese
Argentina	<i>Á Căn Đình</i> or <i>Ác-hen-ti-na</i>
Saudi Arabia	<i>Ả rập Xê-Út</i>
Bulgaria	<i>A' Bảo Gia Lợi</i> or <i>Bungary</i>
Egypt	<i>Ai Cập</i>
Albania	<i>Albania</i>
Austria	<i>Áo</i>
Macau	<i>Áo Môn</i>
Poland	<i>Ba Lan</i>
Brazil	<i>Ba Tây</i> or <i>Bra-xin</i>
Bahrain	<i>Ba-ren</i>
North Korea	<i>Bắc Hàn</i> or <i>Triều Tiên</i>
Bermuda	<i>Bermuda</i>
Benin	<i>Bê-nanh</i> (formerly <i>Dahomey</i>)
Belgium	<i>Bỉ</i>
Portugal	<i>Bồ Đào Nha</i>
Côte d'Ivoire	<i>Bờ Biển Ngà</i>
Canada	<i>Ca-na-đa</i> or <i>Gia Nã Đại</i>
Qatar	<i>Ca-ta</i>
Cambodia	<i>Campuchia</i> or <i>Cao Miên</i>
Chile	<i>Chí Lợi</i>
Czech Republic	<i>Cộng Hoà Séc</i>
Cuba	<i>Cu-ba</i>
Taiwan	<i>Đài Loan</i>
Denmark	<i>Đan Mạch</i>
Germany	<i>Đức Quốc</i> or <i>Đức</i>
Georgia	<i>Grusia</i>
The Netherlands	<i>Hà Lan</i> or <i>Hoà Lan</i>
Holland	<i>Hà Lan</i> or <i>Hoà Lan</i>
South Korea	<i>Hàn Quốc</i>
Korea	<i>Hàn Quốc</i> or <i>Nam Triều Tiên</i>
Hong Kong	<i>Hồng Kông</i> or <i>Hương cảng</i>
United States	<i>Hợp chúng quốc Hoa Kỳ</i> or <i>Hiệp chúng quốc Hoa Kỳ</i> or <i>Mỹ</i>
Greece	<i>Hy Lạp</i>

English	Vietnamese
The Hague	<i>La Hay</i> or <i>La Haye</i>
Laos	<i>Lào</i>
London	<i>Luân Đôn</i>
Luxembourg	<i>Lục Xâm Bảo</i>
Malaysia	<i>Mã Lai</i> or <i>Mã Lai Á</i>
Marseille	<i>Mạc Xây</i> or <i>Mac-xây</i>
Moscow	<i>Matxcova</i> or <i>Mạc Tư Khoa</i>
Mexico	<i>Mễ Tây Cơ</i>
Myanmar	<i>Miến Điện</i>
Mongolia	<i>Mông Cổ</i>
Norway	<i>Na Uy</i>
South Africa	<i>Nam Phi</i>
Serbia	<i>Nam Tư</i>
Russia	<i>Nga</i> or <i>Liên Xô</i>
Japan	<i>Nhật Bản</i>
Paris	<i>Pa-ris</i> or <i>Ba-lê</i>
France	<i>Pháp</i> or <i>Nước Pháp</i> or <i>Pháp Quốc</i> (sometimes <i>Tây</i>)
Finland	<i>Phần Lan</i>
Philippines	<i>Phi Luật Tân</i>
Rwanda	<i>R-quan-đa</i>
Rome	<i>Rô-ma</i> or <i>La Mã</i>
Romania	<i>Ru-ma-ni</i>
Chad	<i>Sát</i>
Cyprus	<i>Síp</i>
New Zealand	<i>Tân Tây Lan</i>
Spain	<i>Tây Ban Nha</i>
Thailand	<i>Thái Lan</i> or <i>Thái Quốc</i>
Turkey	<i>Thổ Nhĩ Kỳ</i>
Sweden	<i>Thụy Điển</i>
Switzerland	<i>Thụy Sĩ</i>
Togo	<i>Tô Gô</i>
China	<i>Trung Quốc</i> or <i>Trung Hoa</i> or <i>Tàu</i>
Australia	<i>Úc</i> or <i>Ôx-tray-lia</i>
Ukraine	<i>Úc-rai-na</i>
Vienna	<i>Viên</i>
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	<i>Vương quốc Liên hiệp Anh</i> or <i>Vương quốc Anh</i> or <i>Anh</i>
Samoa	<i>Xa-moa</i>
St Petersburg	<i>Xanh Pê-téc-bua</i>
San Francisco	<i>Xăng Fơ-răng-xít-cô</i>
Senegal	<i>Xê-nê-gan</i>
Syria	<i>Xi-ri</i>

English	Vietnamese
Singapore	<i>Xin-ga-po</i>
Somalia	<i>Xô-ma-li</i>
Sri Lanka	<i>Xri Lan-ca</i>
Sudan	<i>Xu Đan</i>

European names are often transliterated phonetically into Vietnamese when written in *quốc ngữ*. Some names that appear in the documents used in this thesis are shown in Table A-3, sorted on the Vietnamese names.

Table A-3: Names of Europeans

English	Vietnamese
Jean Decoux	Đờ-cu
Charles de Gaulle	Đờ-Gôn
Adolf Hitler	Hít-le, Hít-lơ
Benito Mussolini	Mút-xô-li-ni
Phillippe Pétain	Pê-tanh
Franklin Delaney Roosevelt	Ru-Xơ-Vên
Marshall Phillippe Pétain	Thống-chế Pê-tanh

Appendix B

Hồ Chí Minh's *Lịch sử Nước Ta*

The Translation

Each page is here represented by a photograph of the actual text with a transliteration of the Vietnamese and the English language translation on the facing page. I have tried to give a feel for the poetry of the Vietnamese original in the English version. The translation has presented some difficulties – some of the language used here is no longer in common use in modern Vietnam, Hồ Chí Minh is wont to use some Chinese (Sino-Vietnamese) forms which no longer appear in modern dictionaries (some of these, such as the use of *san* for *son*, were discussed above). There also appears to be a few errors in spelling and a non-modern use of *Xiêm*, which is usually used to refer to Thailand (Siam) or the people of Thailand but here, in the form *Xiêm-thành*, is used instead of *Chiêm-thành* to refer to Champa or the people of Champa.

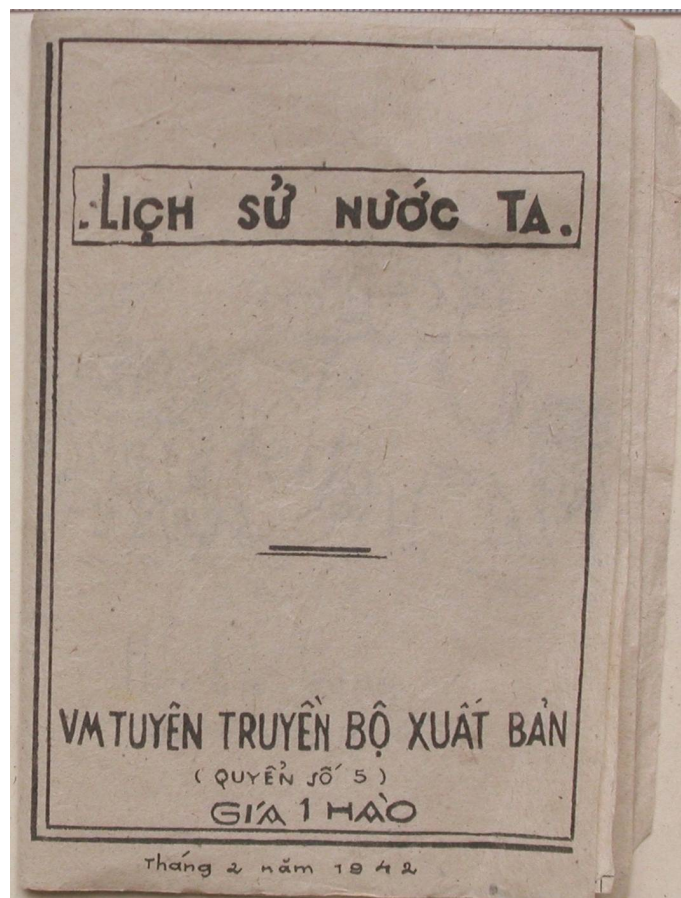


Illustration B-1: Cover (front), DSCN0417b.

Lịch sử nước ta.

VM Tuyên Truyền Bộ Xuất Bản
(Quyển số 5)

Gía 1 Hào

Tháng 2 năm 1942

History of our Land

Published by the *Việt Minh* Propaganda
Department

(Publication Number 5)

Price 10 cents

February 1942

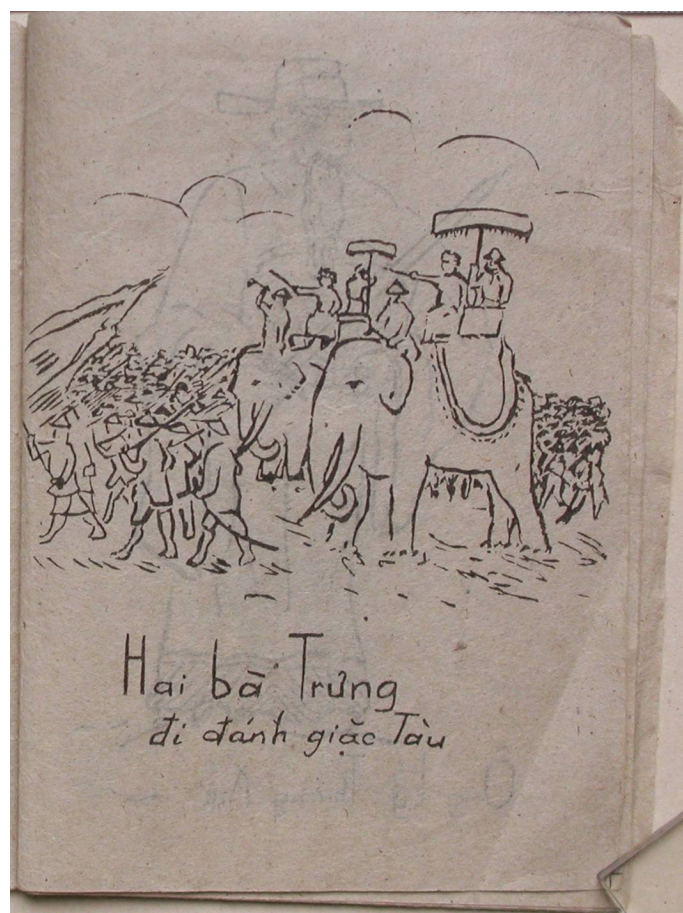


Illustration B-2: Page (i), DSCN0418b.

Hai bà Trưng
đi đánh giặc Tàu

The two *Trưng* sisters
go to fight the Chinese enemy



Illustration B-3: Page (ii), DSCN0419a.

Ông Lý Tường Kiệt

Mr *Lý Tường Kiệt*



Illustration B-4: Page (iii), DSCN0419b.

Ông Đề Thám

Mr *Đề Thám*



Illustration B-5: Page (iv), DSCN0420a.

Bà Bùi Thị Xuân

Ms *Bùi Thị Xuân*

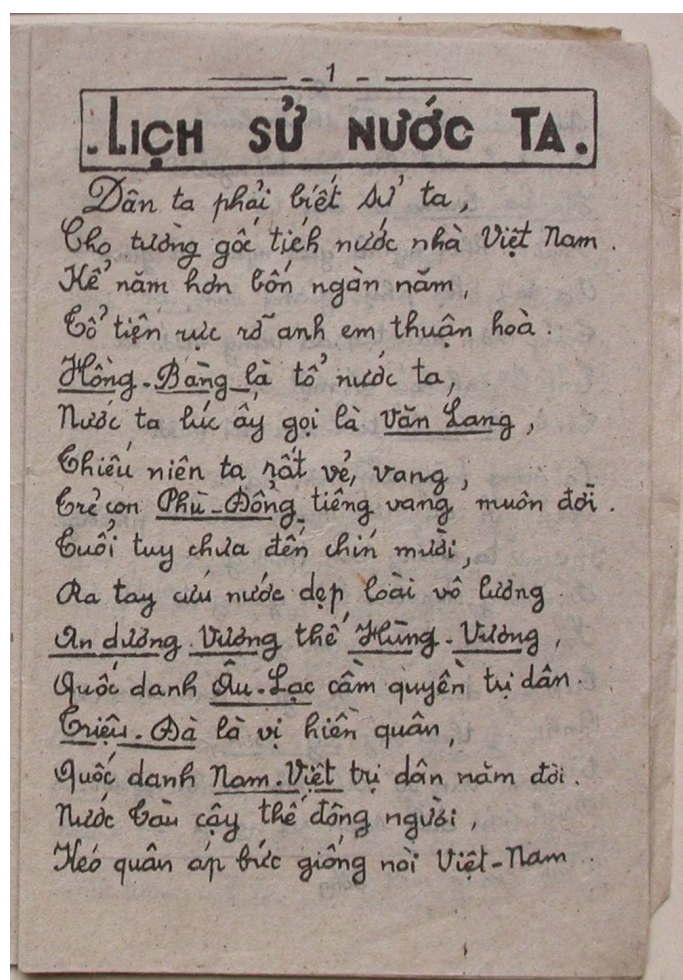


Illustration B-6: Page 1, DSCN0420b.

— 1 —

Lịch sử Nước Ta.

Dân ta phải biết sử ta,
Cho tường gốc tích nước nhà Việt Nam.
Kể năm hơn bốn ngàn năm,
Tổ tiên rực rỡ anh em thuận hòa
Hồng-Bàng là tổ nước ta,
Nước ta lúc ấy gọi là Văn Lang,
Thiếu niên ta rất vẻ vang,
Trẻ con Phù-Đổng tiếng vang muôn đời.
Tuổi tuy chưa đến chín mười,
Ra tay cứu nước dẹp loài vô lương
An dương Vương thế Hùng Vương
Quốc danh Âu-Lạc cầm quyền trị dân
Triệu-Đà là vị hiền quân,¹
Quốc danh Nam-Việt trị dân năm đời
Nước Tàu cậy thế đông người,
Kéo quân áp bức giống nòi Việt-Nam.

— 1 —

History of Our Land

Our people must know our history
Gain an understanding of the roots of the
Vietnamese homeland
Actual age more than four thousand years
Splendid ancestors harmonious family
Hồng-Bàng the ancestor of our land,
Then our land called Văn Lang
Our very honourable young people
The child of Phù-Đổng² echoes for ever
Age not yet reached nine or ten,
Set out to save the land putting down all
kinds of cruelty
An dương Vương³ succeeding Hùng Vương⁴
Ruled the people of the country called Âu-
Lạc
Triệu-Đà was a wise leader,
Ruled the people of Nam-Việt for five reigns.
China, overcrowded, outnumbered us,
Bringing troops to oppress the Vietnamese
people.

¹ This line and the following one are omitted from contemporary reproductions of the *Lịch sử Nước Ta*.

² A fabled child during the reign of the (mythical) sixth Hùng king – he is now Phù Đổng Thiên Vương (the Heavenly King).

³ Thục Phán of the Thục dynasty.

⁴ The Hùng kings – purportedly there were 18 of them but, as Thư and Đức point out, this number has symbolic meaning only, the figure 9 having certain mystical properties (pertaining to a long time in this case).

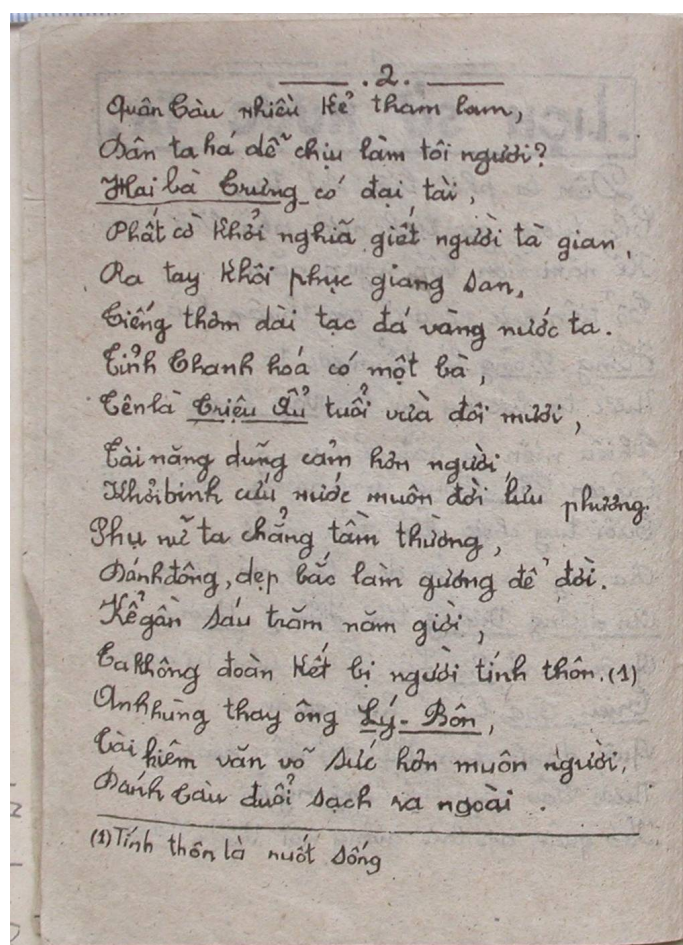


Illustration B-7: Page 2, DSCN0421a.

— 2 —

Quân Tàu nhiều kẻ tham lam,
 Dân ta há dễ chịu làm tôi người?
Hai bà Trưng có đại tài,
 Phất cờ khởi nghĩa giết người tà gian,
 Ra tay khôi phục giang san,
 Tiếng thơm dài tạc đá vàng nước ta.
 Tỉnh Thanh hóa có một bà,
 Tên là Triệu Ẩu tuổi vừa đôi mươi,
 Tài năng dũng cảm hơn người
 Khởi binh cứu nước muôn đời lưu phương
 Phụ nữ ta chẳng tầm thường,
 Đánh đông, dẹp bắc làm gương để đời.
 Kể gần sáu trăm năm giờ,
 Ta không đoàn kết bị người tính thôn.⁵ (1)
 Anh hùng thay ông Lý-Bôn,
 Tài kiêm văn võ sức hơn muôn người,
 Đánh Tàu đuổi sạch ra ngoài.

(1) Tính thôn là nuốt sống

— 2 —

Chinese army hordes of greed
 How can our people stand being slaves?
Hai bà Trưng have great gifts,⁶
 Flew the flag, rose up, killed the evil
 dishonest ones,
 Reached out to recover the homeland,
 Their good name long engraved in our land,
 Thanh hóa province has a woman,
 Whose name is Triệu Ẩu just two score years
 Talented and braver than others
 Raising troops to save the country, forever
 keeping on that way
 Our women are extraordinary,
 Fighting in the east, suppressing in the north,
 an example for life.
 The story goes on nearly six hundred years,
 When we are not united, our people are
 swallowed up. (1)
 Our hero changes to Lý-Bôn,⁷
 Talents of the pen and sword, mightier than
 thousands,
 Fighting the Chinese, chasing and completely
 expelling them.

(1) *Tính thôn* [usually *thôn tính*] is “swallow alive”.

⁵ The normal word order is *thôn tính* but Hồ Chí Minh has reversed the order for rhyming purposes.

⁶ These are the two Trưng sisters who, as tradition has it, set out on elephants to defeat the Chinese in 39CE.

⁷ Also known as Lý Bí, he became ruler of Vạn Xuân (Việt Nam) in 544 as Lý Nam Đế. He ruled until 548. See Hà Văn Thù and Trần Hồng Đức *A Brief Chronology*, p 20.

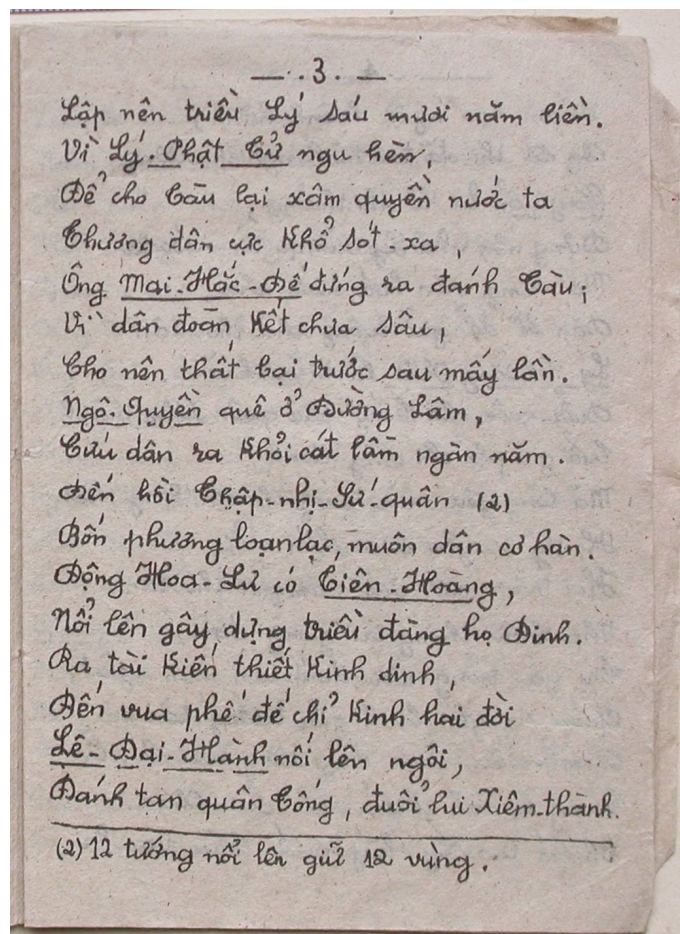


Illustration B-8: Page 3, DSCN0421b.

— 3 —

Lập nên triều Lý sáu mươi năm liền.
 Vì Lý Phật Tử ngu hèn,
 Để cho Tàu lại xâm quyền nước ta
 Thương dân⁸ cực khổ sót⁹ xa,
 Ông Mai Hắc Đế đứng ra đánh Tàu;
 Vì dân đoàn kết chưa sâu,
 Cho nên thất bại trước sau mấy lần.
Ngô Quyền quê ở Đường Lâm,
 Cứu dân ra khỏi cát lằm ngàn năm.
 Đến hồi Thập-nhị-Sứ-quân (2)
 Bốn phương loạn lạc muôn dân cơ hàn.
 Động Hoa-Lư có Tiên-Hoàng,
 Nổi lên gây dựng triều đình họ Đinh.
 Ra tài kiến thiết kinh dinh,
 Đến vua phế đế chỉ kinh hai đời
Lê-Đại-Hành nổi lên ngôi,
 Đánh tan quân Tống, đuổi lui Xiêm-thành.¹⁰

(2) 12 tướng nổi lên giữ 12 vùng.

— 3 —

Set up the *Lý* dynasty that lasted only sixty
 years.
 Because of the stupidity and cowardice of Lý
Phật Tử,
 Allowing the Chinese again to occupy our
 land
 Ordinary folk miserable and deeply unhappy
Mai Hắc Đế stood up to fight the Chinese;
 Because the people were not yet fully united
 They were defeated over and again many
 times.
Ngô Quyền came from *Đường Lâm*,
 Leading the people out of one thousand
 years in mud and dust.
 Then came the time of twelve war-lords (2)
 Trouble in every direction, countless people
 cold and poor of heart
 From *Hoa-Lư* caves came Tiên-Hoàng,¹¹
 Rising up to found the *Đinh* dynasty,
 Skilfully building a capital
 Then dethroned only ruling for two reigns
Lê-Đại-Hành succeeded to the throne
 Fought and scattered the Song army, chased
 the Chams back to their land.

(2) 12 rulers over 12 districts.

⁸ *thường dân* in modern form.

⁹ *xót xa* in modern form.

¹⁰ *Xiêm-thành* is most likely meant to be *Chiêm-thành* (Champa, in the central region).

¹¹ His family name was *Đinh* and he built the capital at *Hoa Lư*.

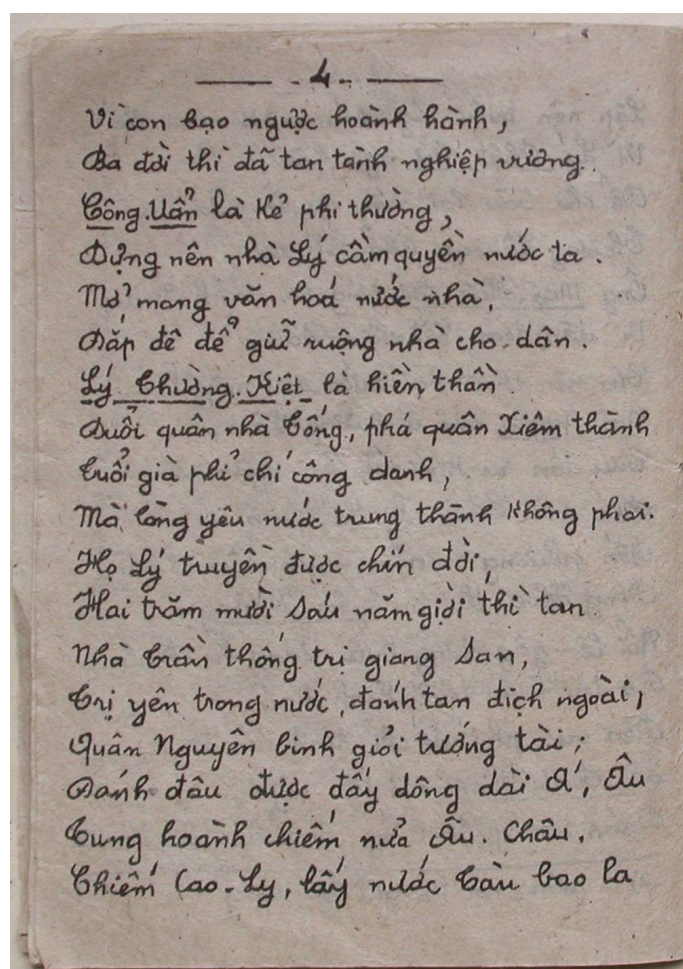


Illustration B-9: Page 4, DSCN0422a.

— 4 —

Vì con bạo ngược hoành hành
 Ba đời thì đã tan tành nghiệp vương
Công-Uẩn là kẻ phi thường,
 Dựng nên nhà Lý cầm quyền nước ta.
 Mở mang văn hóa nước nhà,
 Đắp đê để giữ ruộng nhà cho dân.
Lý Thường Kiệt là hiền thần
 Đuổi quân Tống, phá quân Xiêm thành¹²
 Tuổi già phỉ chí công danh,
 Mà lòng yêu nước trung thành không phai.
 Họ Lý truyền được chín đời,
 Hai trăm mười sáu năm giờ thì tan
 Nhà Trần thống trị giang san,
 Trị yên trong nước đánh tan địch ngoài,
 Quân Nguyên binh giỏi tướng tài;
 Đánh đâu được đấy đông dài Á, Âu
 Tung hoành chiếm nửa Âu Châu.
 Chiếm Cao-Ly, lấy nước Tàu bao la

— 4 —

Because his children were brutal, lawless,
 Three reigns only and the line was finished
Công-Uẩn¹³ was an extraordinary individual,
 Founding the house of *Lý* ruling our land.
 Developing our national culture
 Building embankments to protect the
 people's fields.
Lý Thường Kiệt was a faithful servant of the
 king
 He chased the Song army out, destroyed the
 army of Champa
 A famous satisfied old man,
 But his patriotic and faithful spirit will not
 fade
 The *Lý* story went on for nine generations
 Two hundred and sixteen years later it
 dissolved
 The house of *Trần* ruled the land
 Peace within the country, foreign enemies
 defeated
 Soldiers of the *Yuen*¹⁴ army were clever, well
 led
 Easily walked all over Asia and Europe
 Conquered half of Europe
 Seized Korea,¹⁵ taking the huge country of
 China

¹² Again, *Xiêm-thành* is used instead of *Chiêm-thành* (Champa).

¹³ King Lý Thái Tổ.

¹⁴ *Nguyên* in Vietnamese – the Mongols.

¹⁵ *Cao-Ly* in Vietnamese.

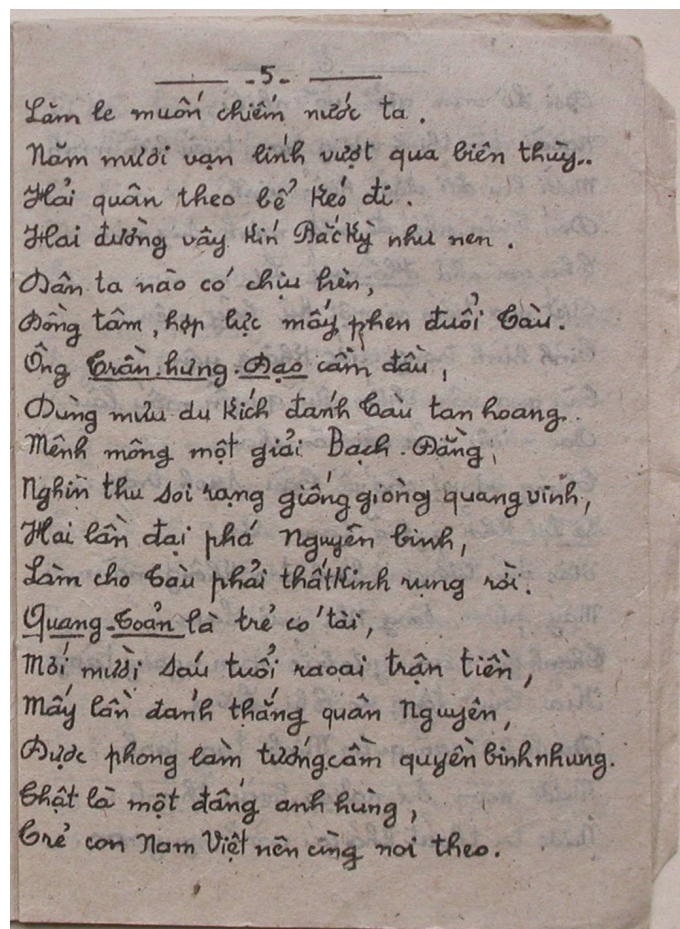


Illustration B-10: Page 5, DSCN0422b.

— 5 —

Lăm le muốn chiếm nước ta.
 Năm mươi vạn lính vượt qua biên thù..
 Hải quân theo bể kéo đi.
 Hai đường vây kín Bắc Kỳ như nen.
 Dân ta nào có chịu hèn,
 Đồng tâm, hợp lực mấy phen đuổi Tàu.
 Ông Trần-hưng-Đạo cầm đầu,
 Dùng mưu du kích đánh Tàu tan hoang.
 Mệnh mông một giải Bạch Đằng,
 Nghìn thu soi rạng giống giòng quang vinh,
 Hai lần đại phá Nguyên binh,
 Làm cho Tàu phải thất kinh rụng rời.
Quang-Toản là trẻ có tài,
 Mới mười sáu tuổi ra oai trận tiền,
 Mấy lần đánh thắng quân Nguyên,
 Được phong làm tướng cầm quyền binh
 nhưng.
 Thật là một đấng anh hùng,
 Trẻ con Nam Việt nên cùng noi theo.

— 5 —

Very eager to take our land
 Half a million soldiers crossed the border
 Their navy followed the water basin drawing
 in
 Two lines surrounded and pressed in on the
 north as a wedge
 Our people have little stomach
 For working together and cooperating under
 the Chinese
Trần Hưng Đạo¹⁶ led them,
 Using guerilla tactics he fought and
 devastated the Chinese
 The vast stretch of the *Bạch Đằng* river,
 Like the people's glorious dawn light of one
 thousand years¹⁷
 For the second time, a great destruction of
 the *Yuen*,
 Done so that the Chinese are struck with
 terror and exhaustion
Quang Toản¹⁸ was a very talented child
 Just sixteen and commanding on the
 battlefield
 Several times fought the army of the *Yuen*
 Was made the leader as ruler during warfare.
 Truly a hero,
 A child of *Nam Việt* we should all follow.

¹⁶ Trần Quốc Tuấn (1234-1300) accorded the posthumous title Hưng Đạo Đại Vương.

¹⁷ Refers to the similarity between the *Bạch Đằng* battles of 938 (Ngô Quyền) and 1288 (Trần Hưng Đạo).

¹⁸ Possibly this is Trần Quốc Toản.

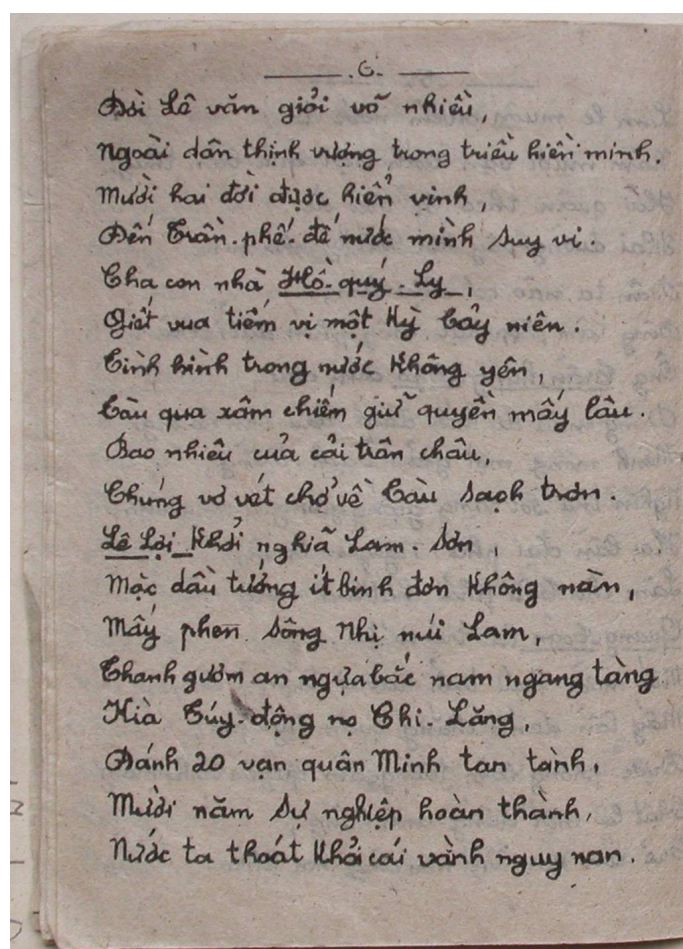


Illustration B-11: Page 6, DSCN0423a.

— 6 —

Đời Lê văn giỏi võ nhiều,
 Ngoài dân thịnh vượng trong triều hiền
 minh.
 Mười hai đời được hiển vinh,
 Đến Trần-phế-đế nước mình suy vi.
 Cha con nhà Hồ-quý-Ly,
 Giết vua tiếm vị một kỳ bảy niên.
 Tình hình trong nước không yên,
 Tàu qua xâm chiếm giữ quyền mấy lâu.
 Bao nhiêu của cải trên châu,
 Chúng vơ vét chở về Tàu sạch trơn.
Lê Lợi khởi nghĩa Lam-sơn,
 Mặc dầu tướng ít binh đơn không nài,
 Mấy phen sông Nhị núi Lam,
 Thanh gươm an ngựa bắc nam ngang tàng
 Kia Túy động nọ Chi-Lăng,
 Đánh 20 vạn quân Minh tan tành,
 Mười năm sự nghiệp hoàn thành,
 Nước ta thoát khỏi cái vành nguy nan.

— 6 —

The *Lê* reign, great intellectual and military
 capacity,
 Ordinary people prosperous, leaders wise
 and clear-sighted.
 Twelve reigns, famous and respected,
 Until *Trần-phế-đế*, our land declined.
 Father and child of the house of *Hồ-quý-Ly*,
 King killed, throne usurped, seven years.
 No peace in the land,
 Chinese invade, seize power for a long time.
 How much wealth and treasure
 They pillaged, took back to China, cleaned
 us out.
Lê Lợi rose up in *Lam-Son*,
 Though a small band, not dispirited
 Many times along the Red River, and on
Lam mountains,
 The pacifying sword riding north and south
 uncontrollably
 Over there at the *Chi-Lăng* fort,¹⁹
 Fought 200,000 Ming troops,²⁰ scattered all,
 After 10 years the job was done
 Our land delivered from the edge of peril.

¹⁹ *Chi-Lăng* is an old fort, the border gate with China, in Lạng Sơn province. The fort is called *Tốt-Động* at *Chi-Lăng* these days, but *Túy động* is used in this 1942 publication.

²⁰ Most texts put the number at 150,000 – 100,000 (10 vạn) commanded by the Ming General Liễu Thăng, and 50,000 (5 vạn) commanded by Mộc Thạnh (see Thư and Đức, 2000, p 127).

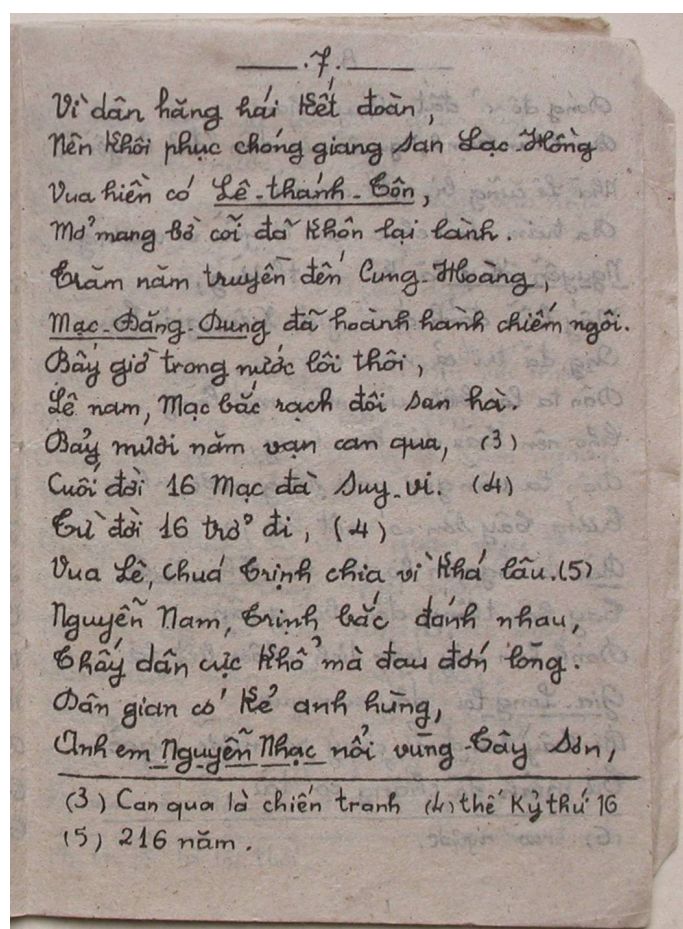


Illustration B-12: Page 7, DSCN0423b.

— 7 —

Vì dân hăng hái kết đoàn,
 Nên khôi phục chóng giang san Lạc Hồng
 Vua hiền có Lê-thánh-Tôn,²¹
 Mở mang bờ cõi đã khôn lại lành.
 Trăm năm truyền đến Cung Hoàng,
Mạc-Đặng-Dung đã hoành hành chiếm ngôi.
 Bảy giờ trong nước lồi thối,
 Lê nam, Mạc bắc rạch đôi san hà.
 Bảy mươi năm vạn can qua, (3)
 Cuối đời 16 Mạc đà suy vi. (4)
 Từ đời 16 trở đi, (4)
 Vua Lê, chúa Trịnh chia vì khá lâu. (5)
 Nguyễn nam, Trịnh bắc đánh nhau,
 Thấy dân cực khổ mà đau đớn lòng.
 Dân gian có kẻ anh hùng,
 Anh em Nguyễn Nhạc nổi vùng Tây Sơn,

(3) Can qua là chiến tranh

(4) thế kỷ thứ 16

(5) 216 năm.

— 7 —

As the people were with joy united,
 So a rapid restoration of the land of *Lạc*
*Hồng*²²
 The great king was Lê-thánh-Tôn,
 Wisely developing once again secure borders
 One hundred years later to *Lê Cung Hoàng*,
Mạc-Đặng-Dung had usurped the throne
 Now our land was internally troubled
Lê in the south, *Mạc* in the north dividing
 our beautiful land.
 Seventy years, ten thousand wars, (3)
 End of dynasty 16, *Mạc* fallen into decay.²³(4)
 From the 16 dynasty on, (4)
Lê kings, *Trịnh* lords divided the kingdom for
 rather a long time. (5)
Nguyễn in the south, *Trịnh* in the north
 fought each other,
 The people felt grief and deep sorrow.
 The people have one who is a hero,
 The brothers of Nguyễn Nhạc arose in *Tây*
Sơn,

(3) *can qua* (shields and spears) is *chiến tranh* (warfare)

(4) 16th Century

(5) 216 years.

²¹ This is probably Lê Thánh Tông (see Hà Văn Thư and Trần Hồng Đức *A Brief Chronology*, pp 100-101).

²² Lạc Hồng is another term for Vietnam, referring back to the mythological King Lạc Long and the Hồng Bàng dynasty.

²³ The 16 here does not refer to 16 Mạc leaders (there were 5 of them (ruling 1527-1592), followed by another 5 ruling only in Cao Bằng (1592-1677)), but to the 16th Century.

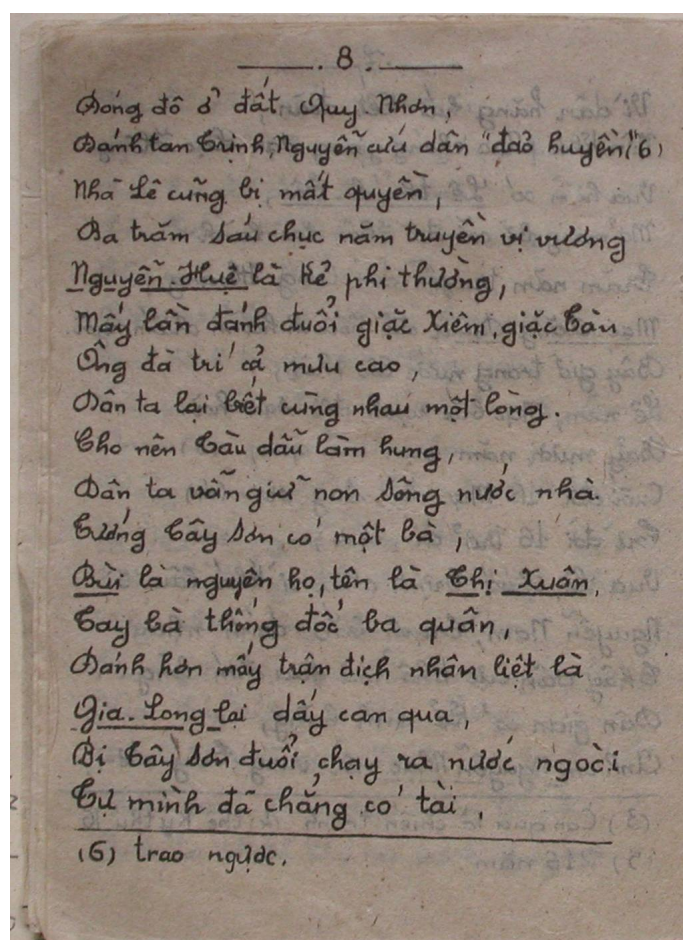


Illustration B-13: Page 8, DSCN0424a.

— 8 —

Đóng đô ở đất Quy Nhơn,
Đánh tan Trịnh, Nguyễn cứu dân “đảo
huyền”(6)
Nhà Lê cũng bị mất quyền,
Ba trăm sáu chục năm truyền vị vương
Nguyễn Huệ là kẻ phi thường,
Mấy lần đánh đuổi giặc Xiêm,²⁴ giặc Tàu
Ông đã trí cả mưu cao,
Dân ta lại biết cùng nhau một lòng.
Cho nên Tàu dẫu làm hung,
Dân ta vẫn giữ non sông nước nhà
Tướng Tây Sơn có một bà,
Bùi là nguyên họ, tên là Thị Xuân,
Tay bà thống đốc ba quân,
Đánh hơn mấy trận địch nhân liệt là
Gia Long lại dấy can qua,
Bị Tây Sơn đuổi chạy ra nước ngoài
Tự mình đã chẳng có tài.

(6) trao ngược²⁵

— 8 —

The capital was established at *Quy Nhơn*,
Struck and scattered the *Trịnh* and *Nguyễn*,
saved the people “hung upside down” (6)
The house of *Lê* also lost power
The throne transmitted over three hundred
and six decades
Nguyễn Huệ was an exceptional individual,
Many times fought and overcame the
Siamese and the Chinese enemy
He was intelligent, cared for all,
Our people knew to gather with him with
one heart.
Despite the Chinese being cruel,
Our people still guard their mother land
The *Tây Sơn* leaders had a woman,
Bùi is the family, the name is Thị Xuân,
Control of all the forces was in her hands,
Fought many battles against a first-rate
enemy, who was
Gia Long coming to raise warfare
And was chased out to another country²⁶ by
the *Tây Sơn*
Himself, he had no talent.

(6) hang upside down

²⁴ Xiêm is here used to refer to Thailand (Siam at the time this was written), but elsewhere the writer uses Xiêm-thành instead of Chiêm-thành to refer to Champa.

²⁵ treo ngược is to hang upside down, but trao is used here.

²⁶ Thailand.

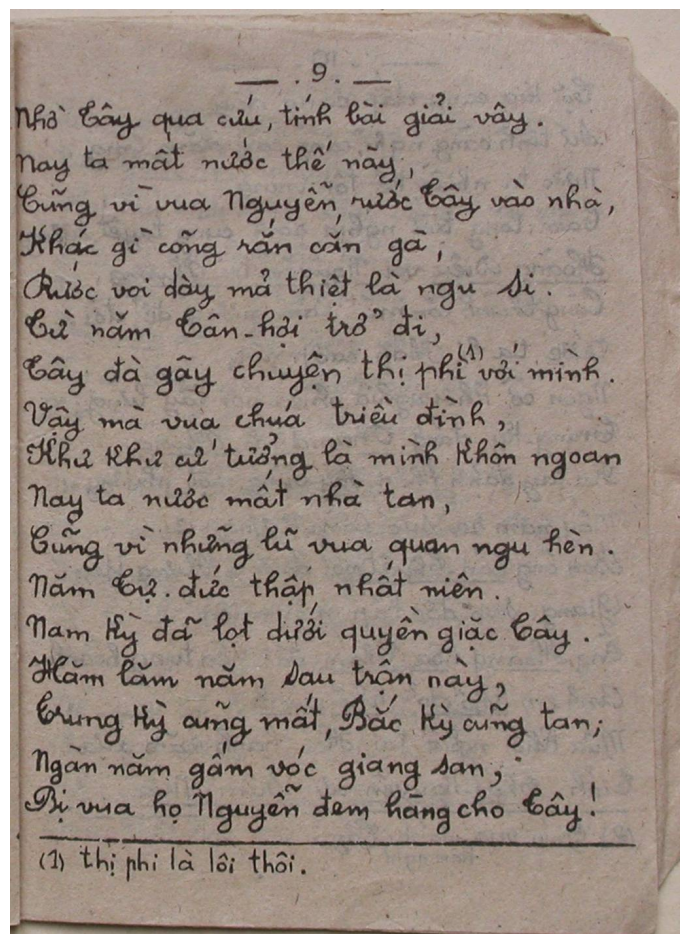


Illustration B-14: Page 9, DSCN0424b.

— 9 —

Nhờ Tây qua cứu, tính bài giải vây.
 Nay ta mất nước thế này,
 Cũng vì vua Nguyễn rước Tây vào nhà,
 Khác gì công rắn cắn gà,
 Rước voi dầy mả thiệt là ngu si.
 Từ năm Tân-hợi trở đi,
 Tây đà gây chuyện thị phi⁽¹⁾ với mình.
 Vậy mà vua chúa triều đình,
 Khư khư cứ tưởng là mình khôn ngoan
 Nay ta nước mất nhà tan,
 Cũng vì những lũ vua quan ngu hèn.
 Năm Tự-đức thập nhất niên.
 Nam kỳ đã lọt dưới quyền giặc Tây.
 Hăm lăm năm sau trận này,
 Trung kỳ cũng mất, Bắc kỳ cũng tan;
 Ngàn năm gấm vóc giang san,
 Bị vua họ Nguyễn đem hàng cho Tây!

(1) thị phi là lời thôi.

— 9 —

[Gia Long] asking help of passing²⁷ French to
 restore, to solve the problem,
 Now we lost the land that way,
 Because the *Nguyễn* kings invited the French
 in,
 No different to nesting a serpent in the
 bosom,²⁸
 Inviting a large elephant to cause damage is
 stupid.
 From the year *Tân-hợi*,²⁹
 The French have caused trouble (1) for us.
 Nevertheless the rulers and the court,
 Persist in thinking they have wisdom
 Now our country is lost our home broken,
 Because of the very stupid gang of rulers.
 In the eleventh year of *Tự-Đức*'s reign.
 The Southern region fell under rule of the
 French enemy.
 Intimidated by these five years, six battles,
 Centre too was lost, the North broken up;
 One thousand years of the beauty of our
 land,
 Surrendered to the French by the *Nguyễn*
 line of kings!

(1) *thị phi* (harmful rumour) is *lời thôi*
 (trouble).

²⁷ The reference here is probably to the initial French interest in mainland Southeast Asia as being a way to access the supposed riches of Southern China (see Chapius 2000, p 30).

²⁸ *công rắn cắn gà nhà* is a Vietnamese expression which is possibly best translated this way (literally “a piggybacked snake bites the chicken in the house”).

²⁹ The year *tân-hợi* is 1851. In fact, the French seized Cochinchina in 1862 (the year *nhâm tuất*).

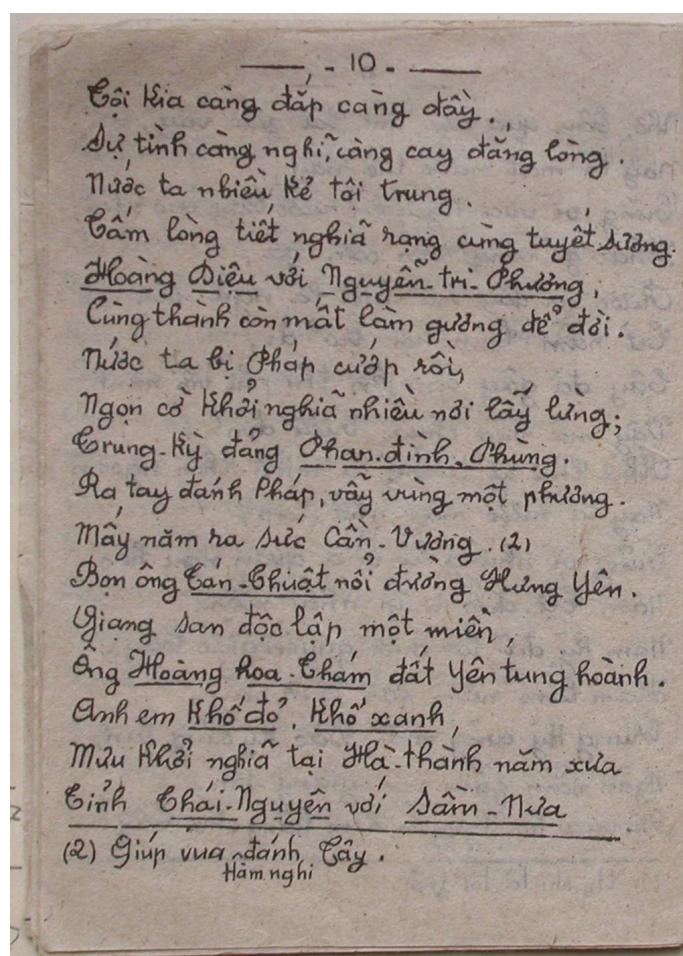


Illustration B-15: Page 10, DSCN0425a.

— 10 —

Tội kia càng đắp càng đầy.
 Sự tình càng nghĩ càng cay đắng lòng.
 Nước ta nhiều kẻ tội trung.
 Tấm lòng tiết nghĩa rạng cùng tuyết sương.
Hoàng Diệu với Nguyễn-tri-Phương,
 Cùng thành còn mất làm gương để đời.
 Nước ta bị Pháp cướp rồi,
 Ngọn cờ khởi nghĩa nhiều nơi lấy lừng;
 Trung kỳ đảng Phan-đình-Phùng.
 Ra tay đánh Pháp, vẫy vùng một phương.
 Mấy năm ra sức Cần-Vương (2)
 Bọn ông Tán-Thuật nổi đường Hưng Yên.
 Giang san độc lập một miền,
 Ông Hoàng hoa-Thám đất Yên tung hoành.
 Anh em Khố đỏ, Khố xanh,
 Mưu khởi nghĩa tại Hà-thành năm xưa
 Tỉnh Thái-Nguyên với Sầm-Nưa

(2) Giúp vua Hàm nghi đánh Tây.

— 10 —

These crimes became fuller and deeper.
 The more we think of it, the more miserable
 it is.
 Many of our country's people were loyal
 subjects.
 Loyal hearts shining through suffering.
Hoàng Diệu with Nguyễn-tri-Phương,
 In the end city³⁰ still lost, leaving their lives as
 an example.
 The French had already stolen our country,
 Many places the flag of uprising was
 widespread,
 In the Centre the party of Phan-đình-Phùng
 Extended its hand, freely in one area, to
 strike the French
 For several years Cần-Vương (2) was active
Tán-Thuật's³¹ group surfaced along Hưng
Yên road
 Independence for one area of the beautiful
 land,
Hoàng hoa-Thám roamed freely in Yên.
 The brothers Khố đỏ, Khố xanh,³²
 Plotted an uprising at Hà-thành in days gone
 by
 The provinces Thái-Nguyên with Sầm-Nưa

(2) Helping king Hàm nghi fight the French.

³⁰ The city is Hà Nội, they fought against the French in Hanoi in 1882 and lost their lives through suicide.

³¹ Nguyễn Tấn Thuật.

³² The “Red cloths” (Khố đỏ) and “Green cloths” (Khố xanh) were non-French (native) soldiers.

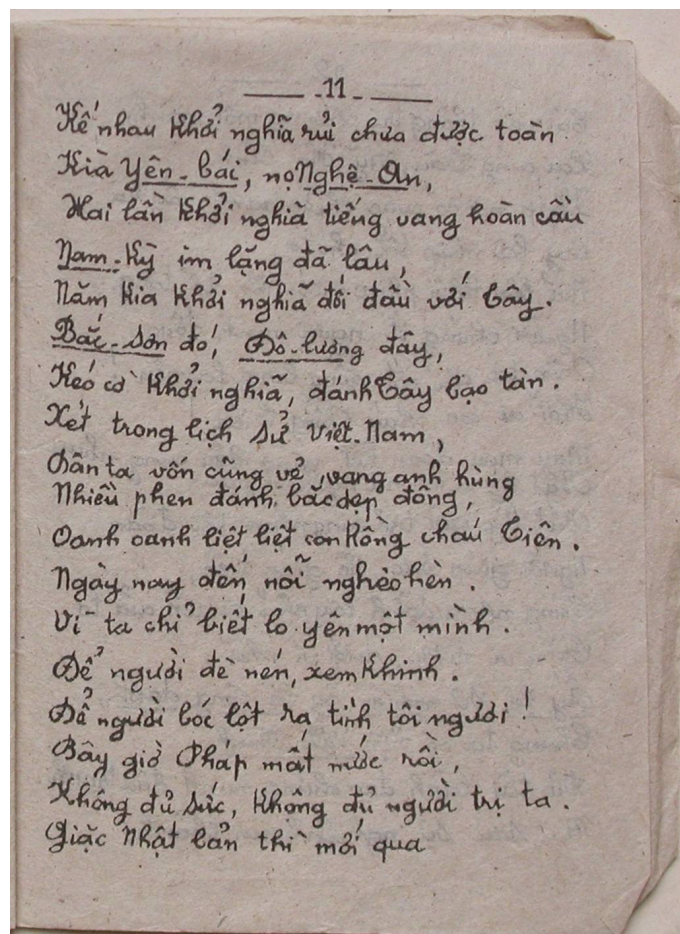


Illustration B-16: Page 11, DSCN0425b.

— 11 —

Kể nhau khởi nghĩa rủi chưa được toàn
Kìa Yên-bái, nọ Nghê-An,
Hai lần khởi nghĩa tiếng vang hoàn cầu
Nam-kỳ im lặng đã lâu,
Năm kia khởi nghĩa đối đầu với Tây.
Bắc-sơn đó, Đô-lương đây,
Kéo cờ khởi nghĩa, đánh Tây bạo tàn.
Xét trong lịch sử Việt-Nam,
Dân ta vốn cũng vẻ vang anh hùng
Nhiều phen đánh bắc dẹp đông,
Oanh oanh liệt liệt con Rồng cháu Tiên.
Ngày nay đến nỗi nghèo hèn.
Vì ta chỉ biết lo yên một mình.
Để người dè nén, xem khinh.
Để người bóc lột ra tình tôi người!
Bây giờ Pháp mất nước rồi,
Không đủ sức, không đủ người trị ta.
Giặc Nhật bản thì mới qua

— 11 —

Uprisings plotted, not well done
Over there Yên-bái, and there Nghê-An,
Twice the sound of revolt echoes over the
world
In Nam-kỳ³³ already a long silence,
Years ago rebellions confronted the French.
Bắc-sơn there, Đô-lương here,
Raising the flag of rebellion, boldly fighting
the French to the end.
Seen in the light of the history of Việt Nam,
Our people have heroic and glorious capital
Many times struck to the north, put down
those in the east,
Heroic children of the Dragon and the Fairy
Today have come to this poor and humble
state.
Because we only know to worry about
ourselves.
Let people oppress you, you invite scorn
Let people exploit you, you become slaves!
Now France has lost its land³⁴
Incapable, unable to rule our people.
The Japanese enemy will surely soon pass.

³³ The southern section of Vietnam. The uprising of 23 November 1940 does not seem to rate a mention (maybe because it was not endorsed by Hồ Chí Minh - see Quinn-Judge 2003, p 243).

³⁴ To Germany in World War II.

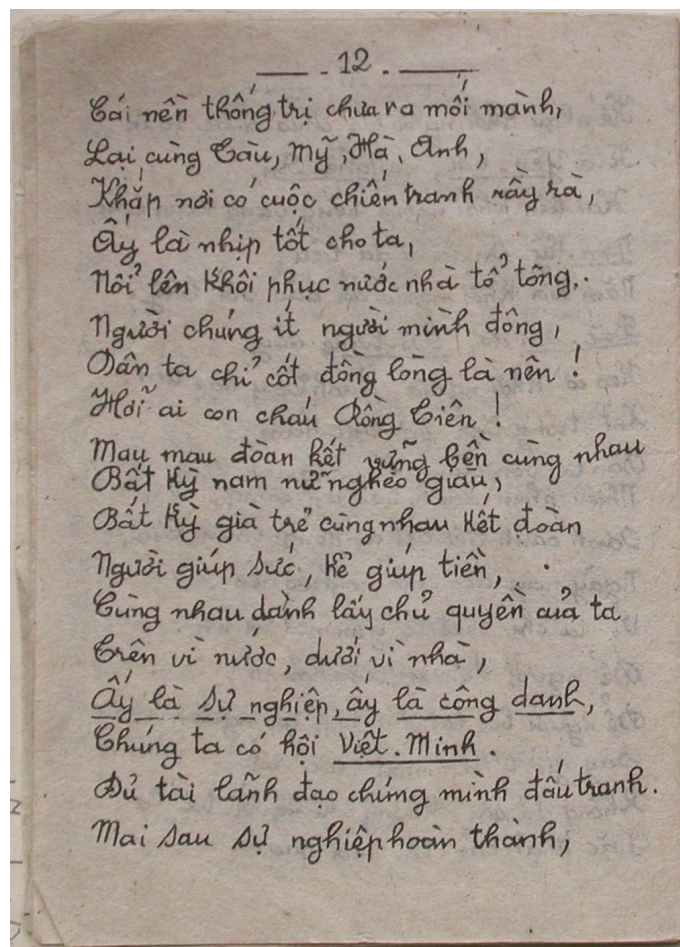


Illustration B-17: Page 12, DSCN0426a.

— 12 —

Cái nền thống trị chưa ra mỗi mảnh,
Lại cùng Tàu, Mỹ, Hà, Anh,
Khắp nơi có cuộc chiến tranh rầy rà,
Ấy là nhịp tốt cho ta,
Nổi lên khôi phục nước nhà tổ tông.
Người chúng ít người mình đông,
Dân ta chỉ cốt đồng lòng là nên!
Hỡi ai con cháu Rồng Tiên!
Mau mau đoàn kết vững bền cùng nhau
Bất kỳ nam nữ nghèo giàu
Bất kỳ già trẻ cùng nhau kết đoàn
Người giúp sức, kẻ giúp tiền,
Cùng nhau dành lấy chủ quyền của ta
Trên vì nước dưới vì nhà,
Ấy là sự nghiệp, ấy là công danh,
Chúng ta có hội Việt Minh.
Đủ tài lãnh đạo chúng mình đấu tranh.
Mai sau sự nghiệp hoàn thành,

— 12 —

The foundation of rule is not yet settled
The joint return of China, America,
Holland,³⁵ England,
Everywhere there is complex warfare,
This is a good opportunity for us,
To rise up, to regain the land of our
forefathers.
Their number is small, ours many,
As long as our people are united, success is
there!
Calling all children of the Dragon and Fairy!
Swiftly together, form a lasting unity
Whether man or woman, poor or rich,
Whether old or young, unite together,
Some help with action, others with money
Working together hold for ourselves our own
sovereignty,
Above, for country, below, for home,
This is the cause, this is the fame,
We have the Việt Minh.
Able to lead us to fight
Later on the task will be done

³⁵ Hà is Hà lan, i.e., Holland, the former colonial power in Indonesia.

— 13. —

Kho tên Nam Việt, rạng danh Lạc Hồng.
 Dân ta xin nhớ chữ đồng:
 Đồng tình, đồng đức, đồng lòng, đồng minh!

HẾT

NHỮNG NĂM QUAN TRỌNG

	Năm
Hồng Bàng ... trước tây lịch	2879
Tàu lấy nước ta lần đầu	111
Hai Bà Trưng đánh Tàu Sau lịch Tây	40
Bà Triệu Âu khởi nghĩa	248
Vua Lý đánh Tàu	544
Tàu lấy nước ta	603
Vua Ngô khởi nghĩa	939
Đời vua Đinh ... 12 năm	968
Đời vua Tiền Lê ... 29 năm	981
Đời vua Hậu Lý ... 215 năm	1010
Lý Thường Kiệt đánh Tàu	1073
Đời vua Trần ... 195 năm	1225

Illustration B-18: Page 13, DSCN0427b.

— 13 —

Rõ tên Nam-Việt, rạng danh Lạc-Hồng.
Dân ta xin nhớ chữ đồng
Đồng tình, đồng sức, đồng lòng, đồng minh!

- ★ -

HẾT

— 13 —

Make the name *Nam-Việt*, clearly shed lustre
on *Lạc-Hồng*

Our people remember the word “unity”
Unanimous, together, of one mind, united!

- ★ -

END

NHỮNG NĂM QUAN TRỌNG

Năm

Hồng Bàng.....trước tây lịch.....	2879
Tàu lấy nước ta lần đầu.....	111
Hai bà Trưng đánh Tàu Sau lịch Tây...40	
Bà Triệu Ấu khởi nghĩa.....	248
Vua Lý đánh Tàu	544
Tàu lấy nước ta.....	603
Vua Ngô khởi nghĩa.....	939
Đời vua Đinh.....12 năm.....	968
Đời vua Tiền Lê.29 năm.....	981
Đời vua Hậu Lý.....215 năm.....	1010
Lý Thường Kiệt đánh Tàu.....	1073
Đời vua Trần.....175 năm.....	1225

THE IMPORTANT YEARS

Year

<i>Hồng Bàng</i> Western calendar BCE.	2879
Chinese take our land the first time.....	111
The <i>Trưng</i> sisters fight the Chinese..CE...40	
<i>Triệu Ấu</i> revolt.....	248
The <i>Lý</i> kings fight the Chinese.....	544
Chinese take our land.....	603
<i>Ngô</i> king revolts.....	939
Reign of the <i>Đinh</i> kings....12 years.	968
Reign of the early <i>Lê</i> dynasty 29 years....	981
Reign of the later <i>Lý</i> dynasty 215 years.1010	
<i>Lý Thường Kiệt</i> fights the Chinese.....	1073
Reign of the <i>Trần</i> dynasty. 175 years.....	1225

. 14 .

Trần hưng đạo đánh Tàu	1283
Tàu lấy nước ta	1407
Vua Lê khởi nghĩa	1427
Đời Vua Hậu Lê 360 năm	1543
Vua Lê, chúa Trịnh	1545
Đời vua Tây sơn . . . (24 năm)	1771
Vua Nguyễn Huệ đánh Tàu	1789
Gia Long thông với tây	1794
Tây bắt đầu đánh nước ta	1847
Vua nhà Nguyễn bắt đầu hàng Tây	1862
Ông Đề Thám khởi nghĩa	1889
Ông Phan đình Phùng khởi nghĩa	1893
Trung Kỳ khởi nghĩa	1910
Thái Nguyên, Sầm nưa	1917
Yên Bái và Nghệ An khởi nghĩa	1930
Bắc Sơn và Đồ Lãng khởi nghĩa	1940
Nam Kỳ khởi nghĩa	1941
Việt Nam độc lập	1945

Illustration B-19: Page 14, DSCN0428a.

— 14 —

Trần hưng đạo đánh Tàu.....	1283
Tàu lấy nước ta.....	1407
Vua Lê khởi nghĩa.....	1427
Đời Vua Hậu Lê.....360 năm.....	1543
Vua Lê, chúa Trịnh.....	1545
Đời vua Tây sơn.....(24 năm).....	1771
Vua Nguyễn Huệ đánh Tàu.....	1789
Gia Long thông với tây.....	1794
Tây bắt đầu đánh nước ta.....	1847
Vua nhà Nguyễn bắt đầu hàng Tây. .	1862
Ông Đề Thám khởi nghĩa.....	1889
Ông Phan đình Phùng khởi nghĩa.....	1893
Trung Kỳ khởi nghĩa.....	1916
Thái Nguyên, Sầm nưa.....	1917
Yên Bái và Nghệ An khởi nghĩa.....	1930
Bắc sơn và Đô Lương khởi nghĩa.....	1940
Nam Kỳ khởi nghĩa.....	1941
Việt Nam độc lập	1945

— 14 —

<i>Trần hưng đạo</i> fights the Chinese.....	1283
Chinese take our country.....	1407
<i>Lê</i> king revolts.....	1427
Reign of the later <i>Lê</i> dynasty 360 years.	1543
<i>Lê</i> kings, <i>Trịnh</i> lords.....	1545
Reign of the <i>Tây sơn</i> kings (24 years)....	1771
King <i>Nguyễn Huệ</i> fights the Chinese	1789
<i>Gia Long</i> makes agreement with French.....	1794
.....	1794
French begin to fight us.....	1847
House of <i>Nguyễn</i> starts sell-out to French....	1862
.....	1862
<i>Đề Thám</i> uprising.....	1889
<i>Phan đình Phùng</i> uprising.	1893
Central region revolts.....	1916
<i>Thái Nguyên, Sầm-nưa</i>	1917
<i>Yên Bái</i> and <i>Nghệ An</i> uprisings.....	1930
<i>Bắc sơn</i> and <i>Đô Lương</i> uprisings.....	1940
The South rises up.....	1941
<i>Việt Nam</i> independent.....	1945



Illustration B-20: Page 15, DSCN0428b.

Ông Trần Hưng Đạo

Mr Trần Hưng Đạo

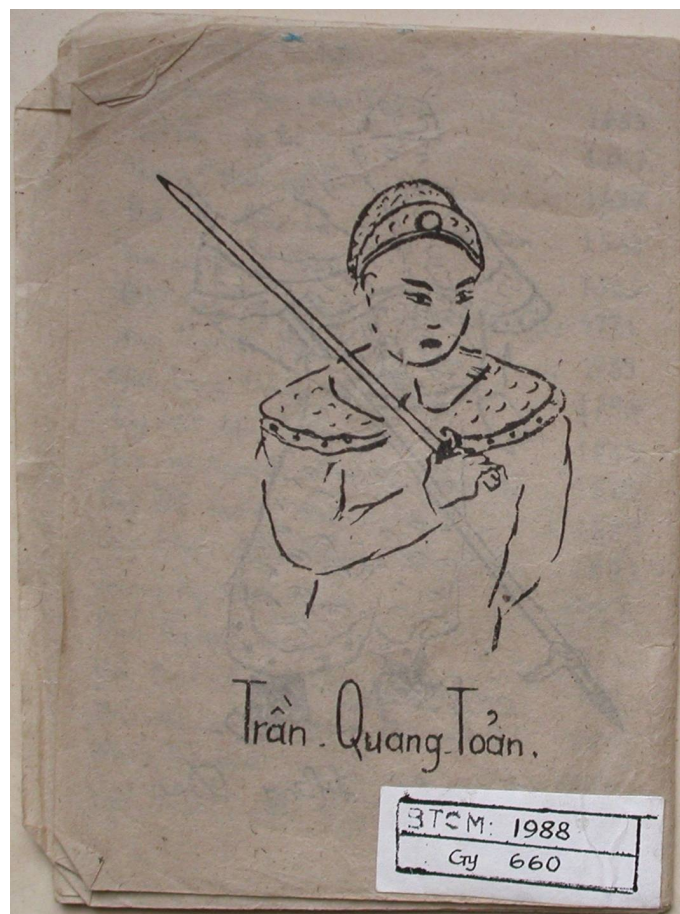


Illustration B-21: Cover (back), DSCN0429a.

Trần Quang Toàn

Trần Quang Toàn

Appendix C

The *Vườn Văn* section of *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập*

The newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* regularly carried small items of verse. These were often within a section entitled *Vườn văn* (“Garden of Literature”). Until he went to China in August 1942, Hồ Chí Minh wrote many of the articles in the newspaper, particularly the poetry. He also used the newspaper as a training ground for reporters showing them, in particular, how to make an impact upon the ordinary people. The table in this Appendix lists the verse contributions and attempts to set them in some context. The metrical forms used in the verses are shown in the table and are often complex, as are the rhyming schemes.

The collection of the newspaper used for this collation of verse is contained in:

Phạm Mai Hùng (Head of Compilation Board). *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)* [The Newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* (1941-1945)]. (Originally published: as Newspaper series). Hanoi: NXB Lao Động for Bảo tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2000.

The page numbers in the table refer to the page numbers in this publication.

The metrical schemes used in each of the poems is shown under the “Title” heading. Occurrences of the lunar New Year (*Tết Nguyên đán*) are also shown in the table with an underlined date.

Number Date	<i>Vườn văn</i>	Title and Metrics	Content
<u>27-01-1941</u>			<u><i>Tết Tân Tỵ</i></u> (snake, wrought metal).
101, p 9 01-08-1941	<i>Đế quốc Pháp thật là ác nghiệt</i>	French colonialism is wicked. 7-7/6-8 metric scheme.	Anti-colonial message.
102, p 12 01-08-1941	<i>Vợ gởi cho chồng ở Sơn La</i>	Sent by a wife to her husband in Sơn La (by-line: “Như Mai”). <i>Lục-bát</i> .	
103, p 15 21-08-1941	<i>Dân cày</i>	Farmers. <i>Lục-bát</i> .	
104, p 18 01-09-1941	<i>Phụ nữ</i>	Women (by-line: “Kim Oanh”). <i>Lục-bát</i> .	

Number Date	<i>Vườn văn</i>	Title and Metrics	Content
105, p 21 10-09-1941	<i>Tuần lễ vẻ vang</i>	A glorious week. 7-7 metrics.	Not labelled as <i>Vườn văn</i> , but it is the lead article.
106, p 25 21-09-1941	<i>Trẻ con</i>	Children (by-line: “Bé. C”). <i>Lục-bát</i> .	The whole issue is devoted to children.
107, p 28 01-10-1941	<i>Cơ đỏ ngôi sao</i>	The red flag with the star. 8-8 metrics.	
108, p 31 11-10-1941	<i>Công nhân</i>	Workers. <i>Lục-bát</i> .	
109, p 34 21-10-1941	<i>Khuyến đồng bào (Ca theo giọng “Tứ đại cảnh”)</i>	Advice to compatriots. (A song in the style of “Four great views”). Simple metric and rhyming scheme.	
110, p 37 01-11-1941	<i>Ca binh lính</i>	Soldiers’ song. <i>Lục-bát</i> .	
111, p 40 21-11-1941			No poetry. Small “cartoon” about Đức (Germany) and Nga (USSR) with mirror writing.
112, p 43 01-12-1941	<i>Nhà giàu</i>	A wealthy man. <i>Lục-bát</i> .	
113, p 46 01-12-1941 ¹	<i>Cha khuyên con</i>	Father’s advice to a child. 6-8/7-7 metric scheme.	
114, p 50 01-01-1942	<i>Con khuyên cha</i>	Child’s advice to father. <i>Lục-bát</i> .	
115, p 54 10-01-1942	<i>Khuyến bạn thanh niên</i>	Advice to youth. 7-7.	
116, p 57 21-01-1942	<i>Điều đồng chí Quý Quân</i>	About comrade Quý Quân. 7-7.	A youth from Cao Bằng, captured and killed by the French in Sơn La.

¹ Marked as 01-12-1941, but it mentions the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour (which took place on 07 December 1941) and the US entry into World War II, so this date is wrong.

Number Date	Vườn văn	Title and Metrics	Content
117, p 61 01-02-1942			No <i>Vườn văn</i> , but two small songs for the self-defence units, together with some advice on group singing. <i>Lịch sử nước ta</i> is advertised for sale.
118, p 64 01-02-1942 ²	<i>Thơ Chị XL</i>	Poem of Ms XL	Written by a member of the “Save the Country” organisation in village “A”. Also published is the Việt Minh song – <i>Tiên lên</i> .
118 ³ , p 68 01-02-1942 ⁴			Nothing, but a cartoon extolling Chiang Kai Shek.
<u>15-02-1942</u>			<u>Tết Nhâm Ngọ</u> (horse, virgin land).
119, p 71 21-02-1942	<i>Nga-Đức chiến tranh</i>	Russia and Germany are at war. 7-7/6-8.	
120, p 75 10-03-1942	<i>Chinh Phụ ngâm</i> ⁵	The soldier’s wife waits. 7-7/6-8.	A German song.
121, p 79 21-03-1942	<i>Thơ chị Xuân-Đào gửi cho chồng đi lính</i>	Poem of Mrs Xuân-Đào sent for her husband going to be a soldier. 7-7/6-8.	
122, p 83 01-04-1942	<i>Ca sợi chỉ</i>	The thread’s song. <i>Lục bát</i> .	
123, p 86 21-04-1942	<i>Cartoons and song</i> .	Showing how only one or two can not lift a rock but, all together, we can do it. 6-6	

² There are three issues all labelled with the date 01-02-1942. This one celebrates the new year (Tết), which fell on 15 February 1942.

³ There are two issues labelled “118”.

⁴ This is the third issue with this date.

⁵ This means “wait”, but the editor of the collection thinks that it was originally misprinted as *quyên* – collect money.

Number Date	<i>Vườn văn</i>	Title and Metrics	Content
124, p 90 01-05-1942	<i>Vợ kẻ đi phu</i>	A wife goes to her husband. <i>Lục-bát</i> .	Also advertised is the availability of the <i>Việt Minh Ngũ kinh</i> for sale.
125, p 94 11-02-1942	<i>Trồng bắp</i>	Planting corn. 7-7/6-8.	
126, p 98 21-05-1942	<i>Phải giữ bí mật</i>	Must keep the secrets. 7-7.	
127, p 102 01-06-1942	<i>Tặng cho đội tự vệ phụ nữ</i>	A gift for the women's self-defence unit. 7-7/6-8.	Also has information about an exhibition.
128, p 106 11-06-1942	<i>Cảm ơn anh chị em ủng hộ báo</i>	Thank you brothers and sisters for contributions to the paper. 7-7/6-8.	
129, p 110 21-06-1942	<i>Nước Pháp</i>	France. 7-7.	On the occasion of the anniversary of the loss of the country.

The previous issues were all noted in the mast-head as being from Cao Bằng but from here on, they are from both Bắc Kạn and Cao Bằng provinces.

Number Date	<i>Vườn văn</i>	Title and Metrics	Content
130, p 114 01-07-1942	<i>Con cáo và tổ ong</i>	The fox and the beehive. 6-8.	
126, p 118 11-07-1942	<i>Tặng thống-chế Pê-tanh</i>	A gift for Marshall Pétain. ⁶ 7-7.	
132, p 122 21-07-1942	<i>Máy hỏng...</i>	Machine is broken... 7-7.	Apology for the broken printing machine.

From this point on, until issue number 194 (20 August 1944), there is no section labelled as *Vườn văn*. This is probably the point at which Hồ Chí Minh stopped contributing to *Việt Nam Độc Lập* as he prepared for his journey to China to try to build international support for the cause of Vietnamese independence. He left for China on 13 August 1942 and returned to Vietnam in August 1944.⁷

⁶ Phillippe Pétain (1856-1951) was Head of State of Vichy France from 11 July 1940 to 19 August 1944).

⁷ See William J. Duiker. *Ho Chi Minh*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2000, p. 263.

Number Date	Poetry section	Title and Metrics	Content
133, p 124 01-08-1942	<i>Nhóm lửa</i>	Light the fire (by-line: Xung-phong). 7-7.	
134, p 128 11-08-1942	<i>Tặng Toàn quyền Đờ-cu</i>	A gift for Governor-General Decoux. ⁸ 7-7.	
135, p 132 21-08-1942	<i>Chơi giảng</i>	Monthly play (by-line: Hy-sinh). 7-7.	Also announces a book of Việt Minh songs and poetry.
136, p 136 21-08-1942	<i>Khóc đồng bào bị nạn bom ở Hải Phòng</i>	Weep for compatriots hit by a bomb at Hải Phòng. 7-7/6-8.	
137, p 140 11-09-1942	<i>Nhớ anh tôi</i>	Remember my older brother (by-line: Hồng, Tuyết (15 years old)). 6-8.	
138, p 144 21-09-1942	<i>Lời quan</i>	Words of the mandarin. 6-8.	Kind words from the French, but their actions speak for themselves.
139, p 148 01-10-1942	<i>Cán bộ ốm</i>	A cadre who is ill (by-line: one ill cadre). 8-8.	
140, p 152 11-10-1942	<i>Chồng nhắn vợ</i>	A husband sends word to his wife. 6-8.	
141, p 156 21-10-1942	<i>Vợ nhắn chồng</i>	A wife sends word to her husband. 7-7/6-8.	
142, p 160 01-11-1942	<i>Cùng anh em binh lính</i>	Together with brother soldiers. 7-7/6-8.	
143, p 164 11-11-1942	<i>Chơi núi</i>	Play on the mountain. 7-7.	Also a long poem welcoming the (mountainous region) <i>huyện (châu)</i> “Đ.R.” into the Việt Minh.
144, p 168 21-11-1942	<i>Trẻ chăn trâu</i>	A child tends the buffalo. 6-8.	

⁸ Jean Decoux (1884-1963) was Governor-General of French Indochina from 25 June 1940 until 09 September 1945.

Number Date	Poetry section	Title and Metrics	Content
145, p 172 01-12-1942	<i>Mừng tỉnh V.M. thành lập</i>	Welcome the establishment of a provincial level Việt Minh. 7-7/6-8.	Cao Bằng is the first Việt Minh organisation at provincial level.
146, p 176 11-12-1942	<i>Mẹo quan</i>	Tricks of the mandarins. 7-7/6-8.	
147, p 181 21-12-1942	<i>Văn chiêu mẹ vợ</i>	Funeral oration for my wife's mother (by-line: Bác Vọng). 7-7/6-8.	
148, p 185 01-01-1943	<i>Mừng năm mới</i>	Welcome the new year. 7-7.	New year in the solar calendar (<i>duong lịch</i>).
149, p 189 11-01-1943	<i>Cõi tiên</i>	Paradise. 6-8/7-7	
150, p 193 21-01-1943	<i>Chia buồn</i>	Share the sorrow. 6-8/7-7.	On the death of two comrades Xích Thắng and Quang Hưng.
151, p 197 01-02-1943	<i>Dân giả lời quan</i>	False citizen, mandarin's words (by-line: Một người dân). 6-8/7-7.	Report on a speech by mandarin Tuần.
<u>05-02-1943</u>			<i>Tết Quý Mùi</i> (goat, cultivated land).
152, p 152 11-02-1943	<i>Núi sông mừng xuân</i>	The mountains and rivers greet spring. 6-8/7-7	Welcome the lunar New Year (<i>âm lịch</i>).
153, p 205 21-02-1943	<i>Gà gáy</i>	Cock crow (byline: A.B). 6-8.	Has reasons why this newspaper is valuable.
154, p 210 01-03-1943	<i>Khóc đồng chí Hồng-Việt</i>	Cry for comrade Hồng-Việt. 7-7.	
155, p 214 11-03-1943	<i>Xuân</i>	Spring (by-line: Tổ Hữu). 8-8.	
156, p 218 21-03-1943			No poetry.
157, p 222 01-04-1943	<i>Nông dân khuyên vợ</i>	A farmer's advice to a wife (by-line: X.). 7-7.	

Number Date	Poetry section	Title and Metrics	Content
158, p 226 11-4-1943	<i>Một người kỳ lạ</i>	A strange fellow. 8-8.	
159, p 230 21-4-1943	<i>Hồng quân Nga</i>	The red army of Russia. 5-5.	
160, p 234 01-05-1943	<i>Con viết cho cha mẹ</i>	A child writes to mother and father (by-line: 1 cán bộ châu L.S). 7-7/6-8.	This issue also has a history lesson about Trần Hưng Đạo.
161, p 238 11-05-1943	<i>Cha trả lời con</i>	Father answers his child. 6-8.	
162, p 242 21-05-1943			No poems, special issue on opposing terrorism.
163, p 246 01-06-1943	<i>Hít-le cầu nguyện</i>	Hitler's prayer. ⁹ 7-7.	
164, p 250 11-06-1943	<i>Vịnh Hít-le (nước Đức)</i>	Chant for Hitler (Germany) (by-line: G.M.). 7-7.	
165, p 254 11-06-1943 ¹⁰	<i>Bức lệ thư</i>	A tearful letter (by-line: C.). 7-7/6-8	
166, p 258 21-06-1943			No poems. Call for unity.
167, p 262 01-07-1943	<i>Ca chống khủng bố</i>	Song against terror. 5-5.	
168, p 267 11-07-1943	<i>Ca Thổ: Sửa soạn vũ trang khởi nghĩa</i>	Song of the Thổ people: Prepare for the armed uprising. 7-7.	
169, p 272 21-07-1943			No poems.
170, p 277 01-08-1943	<i>Hoan nghinh dân tộc liên hiệp</i>	Welcome the minority people's association (by-line: H...). 7-7/6-8.	Unity will win.

⁹ Adolf Hitler (née Schicklgruber), born 20 April 1889, died 30 April 1945, fascist dictator of Germany from 23 March 1933 to 30 April 1945..

¹⁰ There are two with this date.

Number Date	Poetry section	Title and Metrics	Content
171, p 283 11-08-1943	<i>Thơ Thỏ: Tan nà dấp (của đ.c. H.V châu T.P)</i>	Poem of the Thỏ people: ?? (written by comrade H.V from T.P district) (by-line: H.V châu T.P). 7-7.	Not Vietnamese?
172, p 287 21-08-1943	<i>Mừng Mút-xô-li-ni bị đánh đổ</i>	Welcome Mussolini's overthrow. ¹¹ 7-7/6-8	
173, p 291 01-09-1943	<i>Xem trăng nhẵn bạn</i>	See the moon, sending to you (by-line: B.V). 7-7.	
174, p 296 11-09-1943			No poetry, but reprint of a verse purportedly sent in by comrade H.T in response to the last lead article ("Sorrow on loss of the country").
175, p 301 21-09-1943			No poetry, but the leading article discusses the Nghệ An troubles of 12 September 1930, with no mention of the ICP.
176, p 307 01-10-1943			No poetry.
177, p 313 11-10-1943			No poetry.
178, p 317 21-10-1943	<i>Mừng¹² tổng nà</i>	Happiness for nà district (byline: Hy-sinh). 7-7/6-8.	The language is difficult and it may not be Vietnamese.
179, p 322 01-11-1943	<i>Hỡi dân cày đứng lên</i>	Calling farmers to get up (by-line: B.M commune P.T district V.Q). 6-8.	

¹¹ Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) was the fascist leader of Italy from 31 October 1922 to 25 July 1943 (dictator from 30 March 1938). He was overthrown after Allied forces had invaded Sicily and was shot by partisans on 28 April 1945.

¹² Possibly could be *mừng* (happiness).

Number Date	Poetry section	Title and Metrics	Content
180, p 327 10-11-1943	<i>Trích báo V.N.Đ.L tỉnh Thái Bình</i>	Extracted from <i>Việt Nam Độc Lập</i> Thái Bình province. 6-8.	
181, p 332 20-11-1943			No poetry.
182, p 337 01-12-1943	<i>Thơ ca chống Việt-gian</i>	Song against Việt spies (by-line: T.H). 6-8.	
183, p 342 11-12-1943	<i>Đêm đông nhớ người</i>	Remembering someone on a winter's night (by-line: Tuyết-Hồng tỉnh C.T). 7-7.	
184, p 347 21-12-1943	<i>Tặng cán bộ chuyên môn</i>	Gift of a specialist cadre (by-line: H.T. châu T.P). 7-7/6-8.	Announcing a poetry competition.
185, p 354 11-01-1944	<i>Năm mới</i>	New year (by-line: Bạch T. tỉnh C.T.). 7-7.	Solar New Year (<i>dương lịch</i>).
186, p 360 15-01-1944	<i>Xuân và thanh niên Thơ xuân</i>	Spring and youth (by- line: T.H.). 8-8. Spring poem (by-line: O.L). 6-8/7-7	

From this point on, the masthead includes Lạng Sơn in the provinces of distribution, now listed as “Cao-Bắc-Lạng”.

Number Date	Poetry section	Title and Metrics	Content
<u>25-01-1944</u>			<i>Tết Giáp Thân</i> (monkey, water in nature)
187, p 371 30-1-1944			No poetry. Mast-head has “keep the secrets!”.
188, p 376 15-2-1944	<i>Con sắp đi chuyên môn nói với mẹ</i>	Child about to go to be a specialist talks with his mother (by-line: by comrade anon.). 8-8.	This is a specialist cadre.

Number Date	Poetry section	Title and Metrics	Content
190, p 381 01-04-1944			No poetry. Refutes 6 lies about the VM. Denies VM is a communist movement.
191, p 387 01-05-1944			No poetry.
192, p 392 15-06-1944	<i>Trích 1 đoạn bài thơ chống khủng bố của Đ.C.L</i>	Extract from a section of an anti-terrorist poem by Đ.C.L. 7-7/6-8.	
193, p 397 20-07-1944	<i>Mặt trận thứ hai</i>	The second front. 8-8.	

From this point on, we once again see a *Vườn văn* section. It is possibly so because Hồ Chí Minh returned from captivity in China at about this time (August 1944).¹³

Number Date	<i>Vườn văn</i>	Title and Metrics	Content
194, p 402 20-08-1944	<i>Vịnh thủ tướng đông- điều</i>	Chant for an over- loquacious prime minister. 7-7.	
195, p 406 01-09-1944	<i>Gọi đồng bào tham gia cứu nước!</i>	Call for compatriots to work harder on saving the nation (by- line: Nh.). 7-7.	
199, p 411 15-12-1944			No poetry.
200, p 416 15-12-1944	<i>Vịnh các chiến sĩ du kích các-pa-tơ</i>	Chants of the “ <i>các-pa- tơ</i> ” ¹⁴ guerillas, various meters.	Four chants.
201, p 421 05-01-1945	<i>Chào mừng năm 1945</i>	Welcome the year 1945 (by-line: X.). 6-8.	Solar New Year. An editorial note tells us that “X” is actually Lê Giản, an old revolutionary from Hà Nội

¹³ See Duiker *Ho Chi Minh*, p. 276.

¹⁴ Maybe an ethnic group.

Number Date	Vườn văn	Title and Metrics	Content
203, p 427 25-01-1945	<i>Trả lời nhà báo quýt chanh</i>	Answers why the newspaper publisher collects lemons (by-line: Xuân Lan). Irregular.	
204, p 432 02-02-1945	<i>Mấy lời trân trọng</i>	Some respectful words (by-line: B.H). 6-8/7-7.	This issue introduces the formation of the propaganda brigade at Quảng Uyên.
<u>13-02-1945</u>			<u>Tết Ất Dậu</u> (chicken, water in the home).
205, p 438 13-02-1945	<i>Chúc mừng năm mới Tết người bí mật</i>	Happy new year (by-line: Đ.H). 7-7/6-8. Keep Tết in secret (by-line: X....). 6-8.	Lunar New Year.
207, p 444 04-03-1945	<i>Mấy lời kêu gọi dân chúng</i>	A few words calling to the masses (by-line: S. Lao). 7-7/6-8.	
208, p 449 13-03-1945	<i>Xong đời bộ máy cai trị Đờ cu</i>	The apparatus of government is finished for Decoux (by-line: Đ.H). 7-7.	First issue after the Japanese coup against the French (9 March 1945).
209, p 454 20-03-1945			No poetry.
210, p 459 31-03-1945	<i>Chúc người năm mới tốt lành...</i>	We wish you a very good new year... 6-8.	Song dropped from a US aeroplane for the people of Vietnam, wishing them a happy new year.
211, p 465 10-04-1945	<i>Tiến ra chiến trường (Bài ca của đội tuyên truyền)</i>	March out for the long struggle (A song from the propaganda brigade). Irregular meter.	
212, p 471 12-04-1945	<i>Đi anh!</i>	Go brother! (by-line: Đảng Hoàng). 7-7.	This issue announces the death of Roosevelt ¹⁵ (Ru-Xơ-Vên).

¹⁵ Franklin Delaney Roosevelt, born 30 January 1882, died, in office as the President of the US, on 12 April 1945.

Number Date	<i>Vườn văn</i>	Title and Metrics	Content
213, p 477 21-04-1945	<i>Cùng anh em binh lính</i>	Together brother soldiers (by-line: Đội A (Unit A)). 7-7/6-8.	
214, p 483 30-04-1945	<i>Ca dao cứu quốc</i> <i>Đố</i>	Folk song of save the nation. Riddle (by-line: extracted from the newspaper <i>Cứu quốc</i> , northern region). 6-8.	
215, p 490 05-05-1945			No poetry.
216, p 495 10-05-1945	<i>Khóc Hit-le</i>	Cry, Hitler (by-line: M). 7-7.	Probably ironic.
217, p 499 20-05-1945	<i>Gửi cho chính phủ bù nhìn thân nhật</i> <i>Trả lời bài thơ “Đố”</i>	Sent to the Japanese puppet government (by-line: M). 7-7. Answer to the “riddle”. 6-8.	This issue also has a list of the members of the puppet government.
218, p 505 31-05-1945	<i>Hoạ bài, khóc Hít-le,</i> <i>Trong báo V.N.Đ.L</i> <i>Lời gọi cứu nước</i>	Sad song, Cry Hitler, in the newspaper VNĐL (by-line: T.G commune Th.X). 7-7. Call to save the country (by-line: H.X). 7-7.	
219, p 512 10-06-1945	<i>Lời mẹ</i>	Mother’s words (by-line: V. Hồng). 6-8.	This issue also has a small article on the famine.
220, p 519 20-06-1945	<i>Nhắn bọn Việt-gian</i>	A word to the spies (by- line: Sĩu Hoàng Điệu). 7-7.	
222, p 526 10-07-1945	<i>Cảnh dân Việt Nam</i>	People of Vietnam (by- line: V.T). 6-8.	A peon of praise.

From this point on the poetry section again loses its *Vườn văn* title, although poetry still appears.

Number Date	Poetry section	Title and Metrics	Content
223, p 533 20-07-1945	<i>Đội quân giải phóng tài giỏi</i>	A talented liberation army (by-line: V.T). 6-8.	
224, p 539 30-07-1945	<i>Bầy chó săn chết theo chủ</i>	The dog pack dies following their leader (by-line: Trừ Jan). 6-8.	Ironical poem about the Trần Trọng Kim government.
225, p 547 10-08-1945	<i>Tuần phủ cung đình vận bị bắn ở Hà Nội</i>	Provincial chief's palace <i>Vận</i> under fire in Hanoi (by-line: Trừ Jan). 6-8.	Ironical tale about spies.
226, p 554 20-08-1945	<i>Cướp ngay chính quyền</i>	Stealing the power (by- line: Kiên quyết). 6-8.	
228, p 560 20-09-1945			No poetry, but a list of the ministers in the new Hồ Chí Minh government.
230, p 566 10-10-1945	<i>Ly biệt</i>	Parting. Irregular meter.	This issue also addresses the illiteracy problem.
231, p 572 30-10-1945	<i>Tiến quân ca</i>	Army marching song.	With music.
235, p 578 15-12-1945			No poetry, but this issue has a list of representatives from minority groups in the National Assembly.

Appendix D

Tin Trong Nước in *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập*

The newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* regularly carried news from within the country - “home news”, in a section entitled *Tin Trong Nước*. Some of the reports were banal, others brought news of significant and (for some) life-changing events. This Appendix is an index of those items in the newspaper collection.

The collection of the newspaper used for this index is contained in:

Phạm Mai Hùng (Head of Compilation Board). *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập (1941-1945)* [The Newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* (1941-1945)]. (Originally published: as Newspaper series). Hanoi: NXB Lao Động for Bảo tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2000.

The page numbers in the table refer to the page numbers in this publication.

Occurrences of the lunar New Year (*Tết Nguyên đán*) are shown in the table, for reference purposes, with an underlined date.

Number Date	Main Opening Item	<i>Tin Trong Nước</i>	Theme
<u>27-01-1941</u>			<u>Tết Tân Ty</u> (snake, wrought metal).
101, p 9 01-08-1941	<i>Xã Luận</i> (Editorial). French deception.	Why the French set up schools (to spy).	Anti-colonial message.
102, p 12 01-08-1941	<i>Xã Luận</i> (Editorial). French and Japanese together, 25 July 1941, Vietnam was lost for the 2 nd time.	Heroes must become Vietnamese soldiers to fight for the country.	Resistance
103, p 15 21-08-1941	<i>Xã Luận</i> (Editorial). The Chinese and us.	French use our soldiers in Marseilles, Syria, don't pay well, treated as coolies.	Exploitation
104, p 18 01-09-1941	<i>Xã Luận</i> (Editorial). If the Chinese army enters <i>Việt</i> .	From July, French have bowed the head to Japan and handed our country over to them.	Colonialism
105, p 21 10-09-1941	<i>Tuần lễ vẻ vang</i> (A glorious week)	None.	

Number Date	Main Opening Item	<i>Tin Trong Nước</i>	Theme
106, p 25 21-09-1941	<i>Trẻ con Việt Nam</i> (Children of Vietnam)	None.	
107, p 28 01-10-1941	<i>Sự Hung ác của giặc Nhật</i> (The cruelty of the Japanese enemy)	Fate of our soldiers in France and Germany (as prisoners).	Exploitation
108, p 31 11-10-1941	<i>Thiếu muối</i> (short of salt)	Threats to take the people's money, tax revolt.	Exploitation
109, p 34 21-10-1941	<i>Nga-Đức Chiến Tranh</i> (Russia and Germany fight) (comparison of the two).	Japanese enemy acting licentiously, young people in Hanoi missing.	Hanoi, Japanese
110, p 37 01-11-1941	<i>Nhật là quân ăn cướp, giết người</i> (Japanese army is rapacious, stealing and killing people).	Japanese steal silver and gold in Hanoi, French take people to be soldiers.	Hanoi, Japanese, French
111, p 40 21-11-1941	<i>Ủng hộ dân chủ! Phản đối xâm lược!</i> (Support democracy! Oppose colonialism!)	None	
112, p 43 01-12-1941	<i>Chị em phụ nữ phải đoàn kết lại</i> (Sisters unite).	French spent 2.600.000Đ on a prison in Saigon, only 100.000Đ student accommodation in Hanoi. Tricky.	Anti-colonialism. Saigon.
113, p 46 01-12-1941 ¹	<i>Thế giới đại chiến và phận sự dân ta</i> (The great world war and the duty of our people)	Dog bite dog. Japanese and French, taking our people to be soldiers.	Anti-colonialism, Japanese, French.
114, p 50 01-01-1942	<i>Chúc năm mới</i> (Happy new year)	French and Japanese are cruel and steal our salt, sugar, everything	Exploitation, Japanese, French.
115, p 54 10-01-1942	<i>Phải giúp báo phát triển</i> (You must help the newspaper to develop)	French and Japanese oppress us, increase prices, don't permit us to sell,	Anti-colonialism, Japanese, French.

¹ Marked as 01-12-1941, but it mentions the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour (which took place on 07 December 1941) and the US entry into World War II, so this date is wrong.

Number Date	Main Opening Item	Tin Trong Nước	Theme
116, p 57 21-01-1942	<i>Đức và Nga</i> (Germany and Russia)	French in France going down. French in VN have to hand over goods to Japanese in Saigon. Colonists are suffering	Anti-colonial, Saigon
117, p 61 01-02-1942	<i>Nên học sử ta</i> (We must study our history)	Reach of VM propaganda, and the reasons for it, what its aims are. French have increased all taxes.	Việt Minh, anti-colonialism.
118, p 64 01-02-1942 ²	<i>Kính chúc năm mới</i> (Happy new year (VNese))	Some coolies shot dead. This is our land, how dare they. Some workers hung Petain's picture upside down.	Anti-colonialism.
118 ³ , p 68 01-02-1942 ⁴	<i>Ủng hộ Tướng Tổng tư lệnh [lệnh] lãnh đạo chúng ta kháng nhật</i> (Contribution of the General Commander (Võ Nguyên Giáp) to lead us to fight the Japanese)	Report of bombing raid by Chinese planes on Gia Lâm airfield and propaganda response from the French and Japanese	War in Vietnam.
<u>15-02-1942</u>			<u>Tết Nhâm Ngọ</u> (horse, virgin land).
119, p 71 21-02-1942	<i>Công việc mới lực lượng mới</i> (New public works, new forces)	Japanese are very cruel. Recently someone was shot dead at Gia Lâm; 2. Shooting in Saigon; 3. Japanese did not help with accidental bombing at Gia Lâm.	1. Japanese
120, p 75 10-03-1942	<i>Súng ở đâu?</i> (Where are the guns?)	What's happening with the Việt Minh in Thanh Hóa and Nghệ An.	Activity elsewhere, centre.

² There are three issues all labelled with the date 01-02-1942. This one celebrates the new year (Tết), which fell on 15 February 1942.

³ There are two issues labelled "118".

⁴ This is the third issue with this date.

Number Date	Main Opening Item	<i>Tin Trong Nước</i>	Theme
121, p 79 21-03-1942	<i>Bao giờ khởi nghĩa?</i> (When is the uprising?)	None	
122, p 83 01-04-1942	<i>Nhật nhất định thua</i> (The Japanese will certainly lose)	News from the Province. Japanese rape women and girls, steal goods and kill people. Near Cao Bằng.	Japanese atrocities.
123, p 86 21-04-1942	<i>Nhật nhất định thua</i> (The Japanese will certainly lose (cont.))	Guerilla's in Bắc Sơn, French foiled in Cao Bằng and Bắc Kan.	Anti-French activity.
124, p 90 01-05-1942	<i>Những người sợ Nhật</i> (People are afraid of the Japanese)	Japanese need jute and cotton, so French force Vietnamese to plant it. many other countries, education is free, in Vietnam, particularly in Cao Bằng it is not.	Anti-colonialism
125, p 94 11-02-1942	<i>Bao giờ khởi nghĩa?</i> (When is the uprising?)	Now the Japanese take our men to be soldiers for them, like the French did. Take opium from our gardens.	Anti-Japanese.
126, p 98 21-05-1942	<i>Cán bộ</i> (Cadres)	Bombing at Gia Lâm by Chinese, raping and pillaging by French.	War, anti-French
127, p 102 01-06-1942	<i>Cuộc Triển Lãm</i> (An exhibition)	Bombs in Lao Cai, unknown perpetrators. More people taken to be soldiers in the centre.	
128, p 106 11-06-1942	<i>Vấn đề con trai con gái</i> (The problem of boys and girls)	Suicide bombing by Chinese at Gia Lâm, Japanese send troops to Lao Cai, French enter villages in Vĩnh Yên after soldiers. South and centre, many large businesses have been confiscated.	War, French.

Number Date	Main Opening Item	<i>Tin Trong Nước</i>	Theme
129, p 110 21-06-1942	<i>Chống Khủng bố</i> (Opposing terror)	Why are people hungry? Most of the north and some of the centre must now buy rice.	Unite, fight the French and Japanese.

The previous issues were all noted in the mast-head as being from Cao Bằng but from here on, they are from both Bắc Kạn and Cao Bằng provinces.

Number Date	Main Opening Item	<i>Tin Trong Nước</i>	Theme
130, p 114 01-07-1942	<i>Tây và quan</i> (The French and our mandarins)	Example of Old L. who gave a lot to the VM	Việt Minh
126, p 118 11-07-1942	<i>Nga là nước thế nào?</i> (What's Russia like?)	Woman hero from the minorities. From Kiến An.	Heroes outside the area.
132, p 122 21-07-1942	<i>Mấy tháng rảnh</i> (Several months free).	None, the machine is broken.	

From this point on, until issue number 194 (20 August 1944), Hồ Chí Minh stopped contributing to *Việt Nam Độc Lập* as he prepared for his journey to China to try to build international support for the cause of Vietnamese independence. He left for China on 13 August 1942 and returned to Vietnam in August 1944.⁵

Number Date	Main Opening Item	<i>Tin Trong Nước</i>	Theme
133, p 124 01-08-1942	<i>Chống khủng bố</i> (Countering terror)	Japanese anti-Chinese propaganda about paratroops and the Chinese war.	Anti-Japanese.
134, p 128 11-08-1942	<i>Công tác và phần thưởng</i> (Jobs and rewards – announcement of VM medals)	French using fake money.	Anti-French
135, p 132 21-08-1942	<i>Quyển thơ ca Việt Minh</i> (A book of Việt Minh poems)	Floods and storms and still the French and Japanese take rice – hunger.	Anti-French, anti- Japanese.

⁵ See William J. Duiker. *Ho Chi Minh*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2000, p. 263.

Number Date	Main Opening Item	<i>Tin Trong Nước</i>	Theme
136, p 136 21-08-1942	<i>Những điều cán bộ cần biết</i> 1 (Things the cadres need to know 1)	Bombing in Hải phòng and Lạng sơn.	War news. Anti- French, anti- Japanese.
137, p 140 11-09-1942	<i>Những điều cán bộ cần biết</i> 2 (Things the cadres need to know 2)	Tale of a good Frenchman in Hanoi.	French are not all bad. Colonialists are bad.
138, p 144 21-09-1942	<i>Một ngày vẻ vang của châu S.R.</i> (A glorious day for district S.R.)	News of local atrocities by Japanese, and of bombing at Gia Lâm.	Anti-Japanese, war news.
139, p 148 01-10-1942	<i>Thơ gửi cho Tổng Bộ Việt Minh</i> (A letter sent to the Việt Minh general command) (by a newly- established people's committee.	Celebrations recalling the uprisings in “Ngê-an” in 1930 were held throughout the land, taxation in the south.	News of south, centre and north.
140, p 152 11-10-1942	<i>Thơ nhà báo</i> (Letter from the publisher) (to district SR)	News from Bắc Kan and Bắc Ninh about French and Japanese taking goods, and about a French ship sunk by Japanese.	Anti-Japanese, anti-French.
141, p 156 21-10-1942	<i>Hai đội xung phong chống khủng bố đáng khen!</i> (Two units assault opposing repression, admirable work). (From L.S)	Bombing at Gia Lâm, hundreds killed, Chinese planes at Lao Kay. More theft of food supplies by French and Japanese, Việt Minh can help.	Anti-Chinese, anti-French, anti-Japanese.
142, p 160 01-11-1942	<i>Hỡi đồng bào binh lính!</i> (Calling compatriot soldiers).	News from the barracks. <i>Việt Nam Độc Lập</i> among the soldiers, liberation, the people.	Liberation.
143, p 164 11-11-1942	<i>Thơ chúc mừng châu Việt Minh Đ.R.</i> (Poem of congratulation to welcome huyện (châu) Đ.R. into the Việt Minh).	Japanese stealing meat (not paying going rate). French and Japanese forcing low prices.	Anti-Japanese, anti-French.

Number Date	Main Opening Item	Tin Trong Nước	Theme
144, p 168 21-11-1942	<i>Thưa Tổng bộ</i> (Our leader). Many people joining the Việt Minh in Hà Nội and Hải Phòng.		Việt Minh.
145, p 172 01-12-1942	<i>Một ngày vẻ vang của tỉnh Cao Bằng</i> (A glorious day for Cao Bằng province (Province level Việt Minh))	None.	Việt Minh
146, p 176 11-12-1942	<i>Nói láo không sách</i> (Lies, not strategy (about Nguyễn Bách telling lies))	American bombing of ports, local bandits, some French in North Africa help Americans and British.	War news, pro-French.
147, p 181 21-12-1942	<i>Một ngày lịch sử của châu L.S.</i> (An historical day for district L.S.)	Still problems with pigs in Bắc Kạn, French only pay 1/3 of the value. French duplicity.	Anti-French
148, p 185 01-01-1943	<i>Đón tiếp năm 1943</i> (Welcome the year 1943)	French have caused hunger, French and Japanese steal food.	Anti-French, anti-Japanese.
149, p 189 11-01-1943	<i>Đoàn thể là ai?</i> (The organisation is who?)	Japanese taking materials used for matches, Nguyễn Bách working with Japanese and French.	Anti-Japanese, anti-French, spies.
150, p 193 21-01-1943	<i>Ai muốn khởi nghĩa?</i> (Who wants the uprising? (Why we are not yet ready))	French fleeing to China. A drunken Japanese soldier in Bắc ninh.	Anti-Japanese, anti-French colonialism.
151, p 197 01-02-1943	<i>Vì sao phải đoàn kết?</i> (Why must we unite?)	French put on a play in CB, charged a lot of money. French exploit us and Japanese exploit French. We lose.	Anti-French, anti-Japanese.
<u>05-02-1943</u>			<u>Tết Quý Mùi</u> (goat, cultivated land).
152, p 201 11-02-1943	<i>Chúc tinh thần Bắc Sơn vạn tuế</i> (Wish intellect Bắc Sơn every tribute).	Birthday of Trần Hưng Đạo, teaching of <i>quốc ngữ</i> .	The people.

Number Date	Main Opening Item	<i>Tin Trong Nước</i>	Theme
153, p 205 21-02-1943	<i>Giá trị của báo V.N.Đ.L</i> (The value of <i>Việt Nam Độc Lập</i>)	French in North Africa and French in Indochina, traffic between north and south in Vietnam disrupted by Americans, Shortages of goods in the centre.	War reports.
154, p 210 01-03-1943	<i>Chị em ta nên kỷ niệm Hai Bà Trưng.</i> (Our women-folk should commemorate Hai Bà Trưng).	Paper is becoming expensive. French and Japanese don't trust Germany, local meetings.	War reports.
155, p 214 11-03-1943	<i>Số đặc biệt về thanh niên</i> (Special issue for youth).	News of youth. Youth want to volunteer, youth like songs, youth ready to volunteer.	Youth.
156, p 218 21-03-1943	<i>Hồng quân Nga đại thắng</i> (The Russian red army has a great victory).	The newspaper <i>Đông Pháp</i> does not report about the Russian victory. French have co-opted workers in Lạng Sơn. Fighting with French.	Anti-French.
157, p 222 01-04-1943	<i>Muốn sống hay muốn chết?</i> (Do you want life or death?)	French and Japanese confiscate our goods, hoard stuff and charge high prices. Falling value of paper money. Be careful of being captured.	Anti-French, anti-Japanese.
158, p 226 11-4-1943	<i>Khuyết điểm của các ban chấp hành cứu quốc</i> (Good and bad points about the committees to implement national salvation).	Rail line Yên Bái to Lào Cai bombed. Some people working for French escaped. VM meetings.	War stories.
159, p 230 21-4-1943	<i>Kiểm điểm việc quyên B.S.</i> (Review of contributions to B.S.)	Japanese menace, French don't have control.	Anti-Japanese.

Number Date	Main Opening Item	Tin Trong Nước	Theme
160, p 234 01-05-1943	<i>Kỷ niệm Trần Hưng Đạo</i> (Experiences of Trần Hưng Đạo)	When the English, Americans, Chinese open up a widespread front against Japan, watch out for theft of goods and people.	Anti-Japanese
161, p 238 11-05-1943	<i>Hoan nghênh anh chị em giao thông.</i> (Welcome the communications brothers and sisters).	Some French opposing invasion, Japanese increasing police presence everywhere (e.g., Cao Bằng).	Anti-Japanese
162, p 242 21-05-1943	<i>Chống khủng bố</i> (opposing terrorism)	None, but imperialist terror is discussed.	Anti-colonial.
163, p 246 01-06-1943	<i>Một vấn đề khẩn cấp: tự vệ</i> (A pressing problem: self defence)	Japanese need raw materials for making weapons, facilities have been bombed in Hải Phòng.	Anti-Japanese, anti-French. War stories.
164, p 250 11-06-1943	<i>Phải tổ chức ban xung phong chống khủng bố</i> (We must prepare an anti-terrorism committee).	Bombs on Hanoi, Italy and Germany lose in N. Africa, the revolution marches on, imperialist terror.	War stories, anti-French.
165, p 254 11-06-1943 ⁶	<i>Thông cáo về nguyệt phí</i> (A communique about monthly fees)	None, but fees are discussed, and the need for secrecy.	Việt Minh.
166, p 258 21-06-1943	<i>Phải đoàn kết chống Tây Nhật</i> (We must unite against the French and Japanese)	American, British, Chinese bombing against Japanese, British radio urges us to unite. Troubles between French and Japanese.	War stories, radio.
167, p 262 01-07-1943	<i>Đối với đoàn thể phải thế nào?</i> (Where to now with the organisation?)	French short of rice, soldiers eat maize. French don't know about our organisation.	Anti-French. Conditions.

⁶ There are two with this date.

Number Date	Main Opening Item	<i>Tin Trong Nước</i>	Theme
168, p 267 11-07-1943	<i>Thêm 2 khẩu hiệu</i> (Two more slogans – <i>Tổng bộ vận tuế</i> (Long live our leader)).	About Việt Minh tertiary students studying abroad.	Việt Minh.
169, p 272 21-07-1943	<i>Thông cáo của ban V.M tổng V.Q châu T.P gửi cho các xã</i> (Communique from the VM leadership, district TP to all communes)	Tax demands from both French and Japanese. Unite to make gardens, not empty house. Japanese seeking to press labourers in Cao Bằng.	Anti-French, anti-Japanese.
170, p 277 01-08-1943	<i>Hoan nghinh dân tộc liên hiệp</i> (Welcome the minority people's association)	American, British bombing. French enforcing salt monopoly, French slowly stealing rice, Japanese seeking for mines everywhere.	War stories, anti-French, anti-Japanese.
171, p 282 11-08-1943	<i>Bức thư của đội quân cứu quốc BS</i> (Letter from the save the country army unit in BS)	News from Việt Anh, people in Cao Bằng must contribute 100Kg of paddy to Japanese, Japanese want wood and mine materials.	Anti-Japanese
172, p 287 21-08-1943	<i>Hỡi anh chị em mau mau đoàn kết</i> (Hey, brothers and sisters, quickly, unite)	French confiscating rice in the centre, people resisting Japanese are shot, Japanese soldiers raping women. Take care of your daughters.	Anti-French, anti-Japanese.
173, p 291 01-09-1943	<i>Cái khổ mất nước</i> (Sorrow at loss of country)	American, Chinese bombing of French and Japanese. Japanese shipping and motorised transport hit.	Anti-Japanese
174, p 296 11-09-1943	<i>Cái sướng lấy lại nước</i> (Joy at re-establishing the country)	None.	

Number Date	Main Opening Item	Tin Trong Nước	Theme
175, p 301 21-09-1943	<i>Kỷ niệm Nghệ An đỏ</i> 12.9.1930 (Experiences at red Nghệ An 12 September 1930)	French and Japanese taking sesame, peanuts, rice, cotton. Press labourers into service. French terror and Japanese slave labour.	Anti-French, anti- Japanese.
176, p 307 01-10-1943	<i>Cảm ơn</i> (Thank you)	None.	
177, p 313 11-10-1943	<i>Ăn mừng thành lập khu mán trắng</i> (Celebrate the victory in the Mán Trắng area)	None.	
178, p 317 21-10-1943	<i>Kỷ Niệm khởi nghĩa Bắc Sơn</i> (Commemorating the uprising in Bắc Sơn (October 1940))	Secret policeman Tuần Bách brings soldiers, demands support. Secret police destroy everything.	Spies.
179, p 322 01-11-1943	<i>Nga thắng trận phong trào cách-mệnh thế giới</i> (A Russian victory and the world-wide revolutionary movement).	None.	
180, p 327 10-11-1943	<i>Chuẩn bị hy sinh phần đầu</i> (Prepare to strive for sacrifice)	American and Chinese aircraft attack Japanese aircraft at Bắc Kỳ. Japanese everywhere. Japanese and French secret police in the centre.	War stories, anti- Japanese, anti- French.
181, p 332 20-11-1943	<i>Gần 300 đại biểu các dân tộc tỉnh Chu Trinh và khu Q.Tr khai hội chuẩn bị khởi nghĩa</i> (Nearly 300 representatives from Chu Trinh province and Q.Tr area meet to prepare for uprising)	French and Japanese confiscating iron, steel in the centre, air and bomb battles Japanese and Americans, propaganda being prepared by women in B.C province.	War stories, anti- Japanese.

Number Date	Main Opening Item	<i>Tin Trong Nước</i>	Theme
182, p 337 01-12-1943	<i>Tấm gương sáng của thanh niên tỉnh Chu Trinh</i> (An example from the youth of Chu Trinh province)	None, but some news from the central districts, about resisting confiscation of food by French and Japanese.	Anti-French, anti-Japanese
183, p 342 11-12-1943	<i>Hồ háo ủng hộ</i> (An appeal to contribute)	Coolies about to be taken in B.C province – be careful, as they will be used where bombs are falling, American planes bombing at the mines.	Anti-war, war stories
184, p 347 21-12-1943	<i>Thông cáo của ban phụ nữ châu T.P</i> (Communique from the women's board of T.P district)	Hanoi bombed 20 days ago with French casualties, Japanese causing trouble for our people.	War stories, anti-Japanese
185, p 354 11-01-1944	1944	Imperialist terror, rice shortages due to French appropriation, especially in the centre of Vietnam. Students in Hanoi can't study because of the bombing.	Anti-French, war stories.
186, p 360 15-01-1944	<i>Chào năm mới</i> (Welcome the new year)	Many places have news of rice being stolen by the imperialists, trouble between French and Japanese, everything becoming more expensive	Anti-French.

From this point on, the masthead includes Lạng Sơn in the provinces of distribution, now listed as “*Cao-Bắc-Lạng*”.

Number Date	Main Opening Item	<i>Tin Trong Nước</i>	Theme
<u>25-01-1944</u>			<u><i>Tết Giáp Thân</i></u> (monkey, water in nature)

Number Date	Main Opening Item	<i>Tin Trong Nước</i>	Theme
187, p 371 30-1-1944	<i>Khai đại hội ăn mừng bước thắng lợi đầu tiên!</i> (Large meeting to welcome steps to win the first battle)	Successful action against unreasonable working conditions for coolies in Thái Nguyên.	Revolution
188, p 376 15-2-1944	<i>Dồn nhà</i> (Driven into a house (for coolie labour))	More bombing everywhere, more clashes between French and Japanese, more news keeps coming about support for the Việt Minh.	War news.
190, p 381 01-04-1944	<i>Vạch mặt bọn bán nước nói láo</i> (Unmasking the gang of liars who would sell the country)	None, but there is a spirited defence against those who say that the Việt Minh is a communist front beholden to Russia.	Việt Minh
191, p 387 01-05-1944	<i>Nhà báo kêu gọi anh chị em: Chống khủng bố, chuẩn bị vũ trang khởi nghĩa</i> (The publisher calls on brothers and sisters to oppose terror by preparing for armed uprising)	None, but the main article looks at the world situation and sees time is coming for an armed uprising. Unity!	Revolution.
192, p 392 15-06-1944	<i>Mặt trận thứ hai đã mở!!</i> (The second front has opened (Allied landings in N France))	None, but a long article about the need for revolution.	Revolution.
193, p 397 20-07-1944	<i>Lại dồn làng</i> (Gather up the villages (French))	More bombing by Americans, German army on the run, Pétain's time's up, and also that of Decoux. French publish a newspaper in Cao Bằng.	War stories

It seems that Hồ Chí Minh returned to Vietnam from captivity in China at about this time (August 1944).⁷

⁷ See Duiker *Ho Chi Minh*, p. 276.

Number Date	Main Opening Item	<i>Tin Trong Nước</i>	Theme
194, p 402 20-08-1944	<i>Để chuẩn bị ứng phó thời cơ: Phải khẩn cấp đào tạo cán bộ! Phải khẩn cấp động viên dân chúng !</i> (So we can seize opportunities: Must urgently train cadres! Must urgently mobilise the people!)	More bombing in Vietnam – of the rail line. French worried about the Pétain Government, and Chinese on the border. Keep the revolution secret. French take men to be soldiers, don't get involved.	Revolution, war stories, anti-French.
195, p 406 01-09-1944	<i>Nắm quần chúng là nắm sự thắng lợi</i> (Holding the masses is holding victory)	Politics, conflict between French and Japanese, and the effect of the liberation of France. French stopping people using the forests.	Anti-French.
199, p 411 15-12-1944	<i>Chú ý</i> (Attention)	None, but some news from the Philippines.	War stories.
200, p 416 15-12-1944	<i>Kỷ luật</i> (Discipline)	Decoux is the last fascist, de Gaulle is back in power in France. The fascist way is the way of death.	Future, revolution
201, p 421 05-01-1945	<i>Chào mừng năm 1945. Đội tuyên truyền của Việt-Nam giải-phóng quân xuất hiện</i> (Welcome to the year 1945. The Propaganda unit of the Vietnamese liberation army has been formed)	None, but communiques about the propaganda unit and the liberation army.	Revolution
203, p 427 25-01-1945	<i>Anh em binh lính Việt Nam</i> (Brother soldiers of Vietnam)	Now have <i>Tin vẫn cứu quốc</i> (short news about national salvation). Distribution of propaganda.	Revolution

Number Date	Main Opening Item	Tin Trong Nước	Theme
204, p 432 02-02-1945	<i>Chú ý</i> (Attention – price of VNDL now 5 hào per copy or \$11.5 per 3 months) <i>Chống khủng bố</i> (Opposing repression)	None, a propaganda unit is now in operation in Quảng Uyên.	Revolution
<u>13-02-1945</u>			<u>Tết Ất Dậu</u> (chicken, water in the home).
205, p 438 13-02-1945	<i>Chống khủng bố</i> (Opposing repression – continued from number 204).	None, but an article about the new year.	Revolution
207, p 444 04-03-1945	<i>Chúng ta và thế giới</i> (Us and the world – as an independent nation.	None, short one about saving the country. Armed activity around the north.	Revolution
208, p 449 13-03-1945	<i>Một sự chuyển biến to ở đông dương: Phát xít Nhật triệt người Pháp</i> (A big change in Indochina: The Japanese fascists wipe out the French)	None, but the whole issue is devoted to discussing the coup. We are happy to work with the French against the Japanese.	Revolution
209, p 454 20-03-1945	<i>Thông Cáo: của Ban Liên Tỉnh về công tác địa phương</i> (Communique: from the Province Liaison Committee)	News about the Japanese taking over all of Indochina, including in Saigon.	War stories, revolution.
210, p 459 31-03-1945	<i>Đội vũ trang địa phương</i> (Armed district units)	None. Marching along the road to glory, what women can do.	Revolution
211, p 465 10-04-1945	<i>Đường chết của giặc lùn</i> (The way of death for the little enemy (Japanese))	None, but the Việt Minh have shaken hands with the French. Mass movements and people's committees.	Anti-Japanese, revolution.

Number Date	Main Opening Item	<i>Tin Trong Nước</i>	Theme
212, p 471 12-04-1945	<i>Sự thành lập những đội đầu tiên của quân giải phóng</i> (The first victory for the liberation army)	None, but the liberation army is preparing for a long war.	Revolution
213, p 477 21-04-1945	<i>Hộp thư</i> (Letter box (appeal for information))	Information about the new Vietnamese government, from Bảo Đại. Việt Minh does not agree.	Revolution
214, p 483 30-04-1945	<i>Chú ý mật thám Nhật</i> (Beware of the Japanese secret police)	None, lots about the save the country movement.	Revolution
215, p 490 05-05-1945	News of the war in Europe	Whole issue given to European developments	War stories
216, p 495 10-05-1945	<i>Nước Đức đã đầu hàng vô điều kiện</i> (Germany has unconditionally surrendered)	None, but oppose the king's mob. The king is a defeated island?? (<i>Bảo Đại = bại đảo</i>)	War stories, revolution.
217, p 499 20-05-1945	<i>Chính trị trên quân sự</i> (Politics in the military)	List of the members of the puppet government.	Revolution.
218, p 505 31-05-1945	<i>Cao trào kháng Nhật cứu nước</i> (High tide to fight the Japanese and save the country)	None, lots about how to fight now, new association for victory in the save the country movements. The new Government is a farce.	Revolution, anti-Japanese
219, p 512 10-06-1945	<i>Làm cho Nhật là chết</i> (make it so that the Japanese are the ones who die)	The famine and its effects, caused by the Japanese taking rice.	In-country problems, anti-Japanese.
220, p 519 20-06-1945	<i>Trước sự tiến công của Nhật</i> (Before the Japanese assault)	None, but lots about revolution and the liberation army.	Revolution.
222, p 526 10-07-1945	<i>Tuyển cử và ứng cử</i> (Elections and standing for office)	Tens of thousands dying of hunger, bombing in Hanoi and Saigon.	Revolution, anti-Japanese.

There is reason to think that Hồ Chí Minh ceased editing *VNĐL* as, from this point on, the poetry section again loses its *Vườn văn* title, although poetry still appears. He probably moved to Hanoi about this time.

Number Date	Main Opening Item	<i>Tin Trong Nước</i>	Content
223, p 533 20-07-1945	<i>Việt Minh trên quốc tế</i> (The Việt Minh internationally)	Need for a military, getting things together.	Revolution
224, p 539 30-07-1945	<i>Thông cáo</i> (Announcement (don't get involved with Japanese, must consolidate internals of VM, cadres warned about their behaviour))	Vietnamese spies capturing people to be Japanese soldiers and to pay "tax" to the enemy, Japanese very dangerous, transport routes destroyed – N to S)	Revolution.
225, p 547 10-08-1945	<i>Tàu và ta</i> (The Chinese and us)	Việt Minh and other groups (spies, or not together like the VM)	Việt Minh, revolution.
226, p 554 20-08-1945	<i>Giờ khởi nghĩa đã đến</i> (The time for the uprising has arrived)	Japanese surrender, uprisings everywhere – some about Lạng Sơn.	Revolution.
228, p 560 20-09-1945	<i>Kiên quyết chống mọi âm mưu xâm lược</i> (Be diligent to oppose the plots of the aggressors)	List of the ministers in the new Hồ Chí Minh government. News from the various regions, including Saigon.	Revolution.
230, p 566 10-10-1945	<i>Văn hoá – chống nạn mù chữ</i> (Culture – against the illiteracy disaster)	News from all of Indochina, liberation.	Illiteracy, revolution.
231, p 572 30-10-1945	<i>Cương quyết dành độc lập</i> (Look after independence firmly)	News from Saigon, of the release of the French. The national anthem is published.	Revolution.

Number Date	Main Opening Item	<i>Tin Trong Nước</i>	Content
235, p 578 15-12-1945	<i>Tiểu sử những người ra ứng cử đại biểu quốc hội</i> (Biography of the people running for the National Assembly (minority groups))	News of the elections.	Revolution.

Appendix E

Việt Minh Book of Pentameters

A small booklet from 1944 describes the reasons behind the formation of the Việt Minh, and the way in which the Association is organised, what it takes to be a member, formation of cells, need for secrecy, and so forth. Although the date of the copy of the booklet that I have is 1944, there is a strong indication that it was written and first printed in 1942, as it was advertised in that year in the newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập*.¹ The name of the booklet is *Việt Minh Ngũ tự kinh* (“Việt Minh five-character book” or “Việt Minh book of pentameters”),² which title is possibly related to the name of a well-known booklet used to teach Chinese characters *Tam Tự Kinh* (“Three—character Book”).³ Each line in the *Việt Minh* book is five characters long and each of the ten verses, has twelve lines, making 600 characters in total, excluding the opening four-line introduction. The first line of each verse rhymes with the last line of the previous verse, and the rest of the lines are rhyming couplets. The printed copies of the booklet were reproduced from a hand-written original and the whole is finished off with a hand-drawn five-pointed star.

Việt Minh
Ngũ tự kinh
VM Tuyên truyền Bộ X. B.
Quyển số 6
Giá 5 xu



Sách mở lòng cứu quốc
Ta phải học thuộc lòng
Và bảo các bạn bầu
Ai nấy đều hiểu biết



Việt Minh
Book of Pentameters
VM Propaganda Department, Publisher
Book No. 6
Price 5 sou



This book opened deeply, saves the
country
We must learn by heart
Tell our friends
All who would know and understand



¹ See Phạm Mai Hùng (Head of Compilation Board). *Báo Việt Nam Độc Lập* (1941-1945) [The Newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* (1941-1945)]. (Originally published: as Newspaper series). Hanoi: NXB Lao Động for Bảo Tàng Cách Mạng Việt Nam, 2000, p. 63.

² *Việt Minh Ngũ Tự Kinh*. Cao Bằng: V.M. Tuyên Truyền Bộ, 1944. Possibly available for viewing at the Museum of the Revolution, Hanoi.

³ See, for example, Đoàn Trung Còn. *Tam tự kinh*. Biên Hòa: NXB Đồng Nai, 1999.

-1-

*Nước ta bị Tây cướp,
Đã bảy tám mươi năm,
Chúng đè nén giam cầm,
Bắt ta làm nô lệ.
Chúng đặt trăm thứ thuế,
Bóc lột ta đến xương.
Chúng vơ vét bạc vàng,
Còn bắt phu, bắt lính.
Đối với người cách mệnh,
Chúng bắn giết thẳng tay.
Dân ta chịu đắng cay,
Sống trong vòng ngu tối.*

★

-2-

*Nhật nhân khi Pháp bại
Đem quân cướp Việt Nam.
Trong bụng thì tham lam,
Ngoài miệng thì nhân nghĩa.
Chúng bắn già giết trẻ;
Chúng hãm hiếp đàn bà;
Chúng cướp ruộng, cướp nhà
Cướp sắt than của cải.
Làm cho ta ngu dại,
Không để ta sống còn,
Dùng thuốc phiện rượu cồn,
Làm dân ta tiêu diệt.*

★

-3-

*Muốn đuổi cho sạch hết
Bọn đế quốc hùng cường,
Thì ta phải theo gương
Các anh hùng dân tộc.
Vì non sông tổ quốc
Ra tranh đấu hy sinh
Dưới lá cờ Việt Minh,
Toàn dân cùng đoàn kết,
Cùng đồng tâm hợp lực,
Đánh đuổi bọn hung tàn,
Để lấy lại giang san.
Mưu tự do, độc lập.*

★

-1-

Our country robbed by the French,
Seventy or eighty years past,
They oppress and imprison us,
Catch and enslave us.
They raise all kinds of tax,
Exploit us to the bone.
They pillage our wealth,
Conscript workers, soldiers.
As for revolutionaries,
They shoot them dead, without mercy.
Our people endure bitterly,
Surrounded by ignorance.

★

-2-

French defeated, the Japs came
Bringing troops to rob Vietnam.
In their hearts, greed,
From their mouths, charity, justice.
They shoot dead our young;
They rape our women;
They plunder fields, rob houses,
Steal our iron, coal, our produce.
They make of us fools,
They don't allow us to survive.
Using opium, strong spirits,
Destroying our people.

★

-3-

Want to finally, cleanly see off,
The powerful imperialist gang,
We must follow the example
Of the people's heroes.
Because the fatherland's hills and rivers
Came out to fight and sacrifice.
Under the flag of the Việt Minh,
All of the people together united,
All joining forces,
Strike, chase the brutal gang,
To regain the homeland.
Caring for freedom, independence.

★

-4-

*Du kích đánh bí mật,
Chúng có mắt như mù.
Cắt giây thép quân thù
Chúng có tai như điếc.
Các đường xá phá tiệt,
Chúng có chân như què.
Lương thực giấu sạch đi,
Chúng chết đói, chết khát.
Ta dùng lối đánh up,
Lấy súng thù bắn thù.
Dù tàu bay, tàu bò,
Cũng không làm gì được.*

★

-5-

*Đánh tan quân Tây, Nhật,
Nước độc lập sướng vui,
Thế mới phải là người.
Thoát khỏi vòng trâu ngựa.
Dân khác bầu chính phủ.
Dân có quyền tự do,
Được hội họp tha hồ,
Được nói bàn phải trái,
Được bán buôn đi lại,
Trên đất nước, nhà mình,
Thổ, Mường, Mán, Nùng, Kinh
Cùng yêu nhau; thân ái.*

★

-6-

*Thợ thuyền trong nhà máy,
Mỗi ngày làm tám giờ,
Dân quê có ruộng, bò,
Bỏ hết các thứ thuế,
Binh lính được tử tế,
Và được thêm lương tiền,
Phụ nữ được bình quyền,
Cùng đàn ông bình đẳng.
Người già được nuôi dưỡng.
Con trẻ được chăm nom,
Người trí thức, người buôn,
Đều có quyền rộng rãi.*

★

-4-

The guerilla strikes the enemy secretly,
Their eyes are as blind.
Cut the enemy army's telegraph lines,
Their ears are as deaf.
Destroy the distant roads,
Their legs are as of a cripple.
Hide food-stuffs well,
They die of hunger, of thirst.
We use surprise attack methods;
Take shots at the enemy, fire at him.
Paratroops from the aeroplane, tanks,
Also can do nothing.

★

-5-

Strike, smash the French, Jap armies,
Not until independence for the country,
Will our people be happy.
Escape from the yoke.
All the groups elect the government.
People have the right to freedom,
Able to meet freely,
Able to speak freely,
Able to trade back and forth,
In their country, in their houses,
The *Thổ*, the *Mường*,⁴ the *Mán*, the *Nùng*,
the *Kinh* people
Together, love, respect one another.

★

-6-

Workers in the factories,
Will work eight hours a day,
Farmers own land and cattle,
All kinds of taxes abolished,
Soldiers will be honest,
And have higher salaries,
Women will have equal rights,
On the same level as men.
Old people will receive care,
Children be nurtured,
Intellectuals awakened, traders,
Everyone will have full rights.

★

⁴ Usually written "hmong" in English.

-7-

Ta hết lòng hăng hái,
Đi tổ chức tuyên truyền,
Tìm thêm nhiều hội viên
Vào các hội cứu quốc.
Việc ta nên làm trước
Là tìm cách làm quen,
Rồi dò xét nhiều lần,
Sau mới nên nói rõ.
Tây, Nhật cần đánh đổ,
Để lấy lại nước nhà,
Họ muốn theo hội ta,
Mới đưa, vào tổ chức.

★

-8-

Muốn cho hội vững chắc
Từng tiểu tổ lập nên
Ba đến chín hội viên
Phải bầu người trưởng tổ
Có hai ba tiểu tổ
Phải cử ban chấp hành
Kỷ luật phải phân minh
Mỗi tháng hai kỳ họp
Nguyệt phí thì phải nộp
Việc hội phải làm đều
Số ít theo số nhiều
Công việc cần thống nhất

★

-9-

Hội ta rất bí mật,
Phải hết sức giữ gìn,
Hội viên phải hy sinh,
Và trung thành kiên quyết.
Ta cùng nhau đoàn kết,
Thì sức mạnh pho thường
Phải giúp đỡ yêu thương,
Anh chị em đồng chí
Phải luôn luôn suy nghĩ,
Hễ kẻ khác phê bình,
Phải vui vẻ hoan nghênh,
Mới là người cách mệnh

★

-7-

We, gladly and enthusiastically,
Go to organise propaganda,
Seeking to increase the members
In the national salvation associations.
Thus our first job,
Is to seek ways to make friends,
After thorough investigation,
Only then can we speak openly.
French, Japanese need to be overthrown,
Or they will retake our country.
Those who want to follow our league,
Just come along and join the organisation.

★

-8-

If you want a stable association
It is founded cell by cell
Three to nine members
Must elect a cell leader
For each two or three cells
Must choose an executive committee
Discipline must be clear-cut
Each month, two sessions
Monthly dues must be paid
All the work of the association must be
done
The minority follows the majority
The urgent business is unity.

★

-9-

Our association is very secret,
We must maintain secrecy diligently,
Our members must sacrifice,
And be faithfully resolute.
If together we are united,
Our power is extraordinary.
We must help and love
Our brother and sister comrades
We must always bear in mind,
Whenever others criticise,
We must joyfully welcome them,
Only then are we Revolutionaries.

★

-10-

*Ta phải theo mệnh lệnh
Của thượng cấp Việt Minh
Phải ra sức đấu tranh
Lấy nước nhà ta lại
Tây Nhật quyết thất bại
Ta quyết thắng hoàn toàn
Hô: Toàn quốc kết đoàn
Hô: Đánh Tây đánh Nhật
Hô: Việt Nam độc lập
Cờ hồng phất phới bay
Trên nước Việt Nam này
Sáng ngời sao năm cánh*



-10-

We must follow the commands
Of the top echelon of the Việt Minh
We must exert ourselves in struggle
To regain our home and land
French and Japs decidedly beaten
We, determined to gain complete victory
Cry out: The whole nation united!
Cry out: Fight the French, fight the Japs!
Cry out: Independent Vietnam!
The red flag flies
Over this land of Vietnam
The five-pointed star shining brightly.



Appendix F

Vietnamese Education System 1950

The diagram at Illustration F-1 has been copied from File 2748, page 10, from the Vietnam Government Archives number III. It was presented to a conference held in July 1950, the purpose of which was to plan an education system for all of Vietnam once the resistance against the French had achieved its objectives.

GIẢI ĐỒ TỔ CHỨC CÁC BẬC HỌC

CÁC TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC

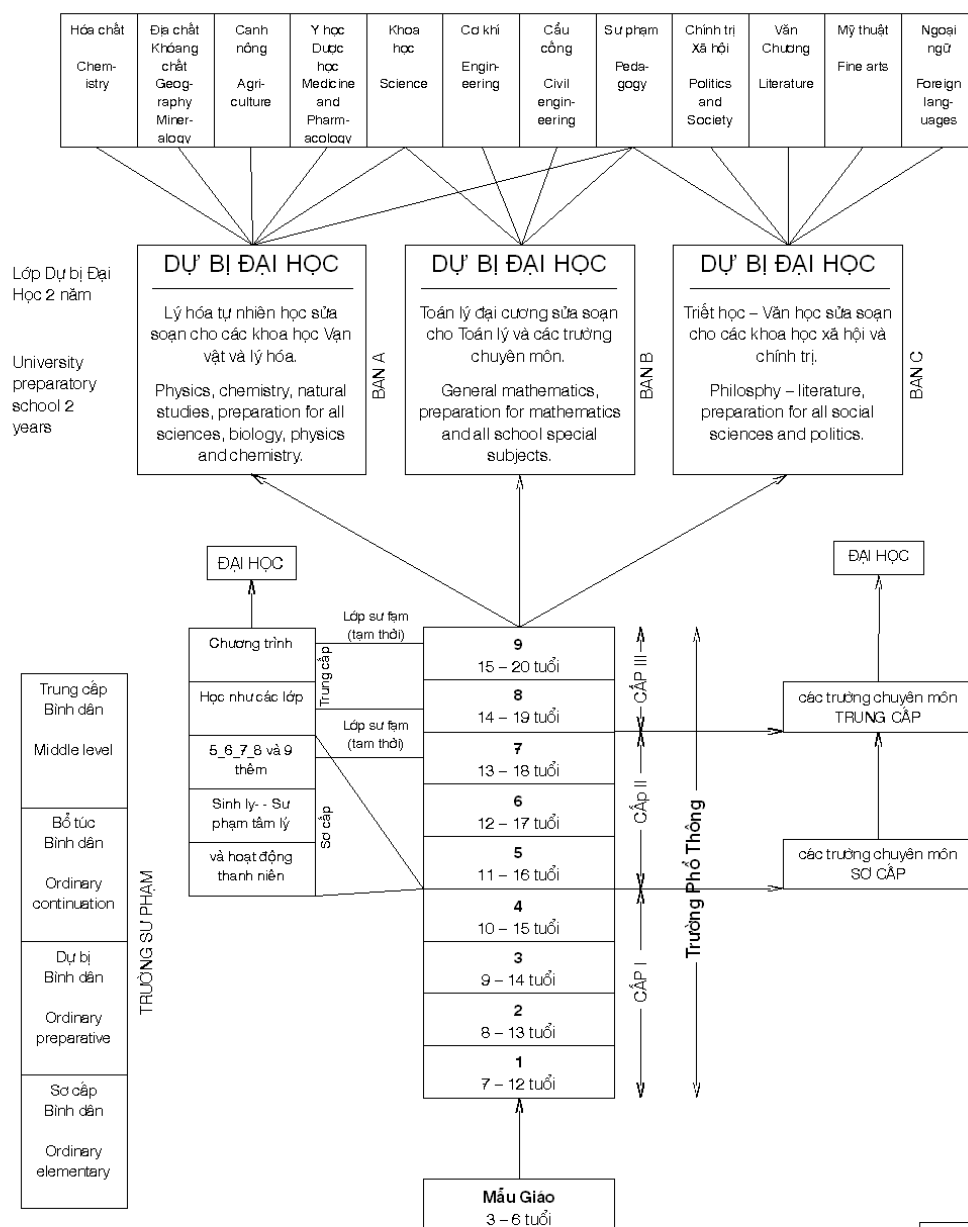
PTT File 2748
page 10

Illustration F-1: Education System 1950

Appendix G

Trường Chinh's *Theses on Vietnamese Culture*

Trường Chinh wrote *Đề cương về văn hóa Việt-Nam* (“Theses on Vietnamese Culture”) in 1943, and it has been published in Vietnamese several times since, including in the first issue of *Tiên phong* magazine, 10 November 1945.¹ The following translation is my own.

Theses Concerning Vietnamese Culture²

Approach to this Subject

1. Content of the subject: Culture includes all philosophy, learning and the arts.
2. Relationships between culture, economics and politics: The economic foundations of a society, and the economic system built upon those foundations determine the whole of the culture of that society. (The infrastructure determines the superstructure).
3. The approach of the Indochinese Communist Party to the matter of culture:
 - a) The cultural front is among one of the three (economics, politics, culture) in which the Communists must be active.
 - b) Not only must we work in revolutionary politics, but more so in revolutionary culture.
 - c) There are leaders of the cultural movement. The Party can only influence public opinion, until the propaganda work of the Party brings results.

The History and Character of Vietnamese Culture

1. Periods in the history of Vietnamese culture.
 - a) In the period prior to Emperor Quang Trung:³ Vietnamese culture had the characteristics of half feudal, half slave, and dependent upon China.
 - b) From the time of Quang Trung to the time of the invasion by the French Empire, there was a feudal culture with a tendency towards petty bourgeoisie.

¹ See the collected edition *Sưu tập trọn bộ Tiên Phong (1945-1946) (Tập một)*, page 32 (page 18 of the first issue of the magazine).

² *Văn Kiện Đảng 1930-1945 (Lưu Hành Nội Bộ), Tập 3* (Document dated 1943), pages 363-369.

³ Emperor Quang Trung (Nguyễn Huệ, also known as Hồ Thơm) was a key figure in the Tây Sơn insurrection. He ruled from 1788 to 1792. See Thư and Đức 2000, pages 171-173.

c) From the time the French came to invade until now: culture is half feudal, half capitalist, and has a completely colonial character (pay attention to distinguishing several stages in this time).

2. The Essence of Vietnamese culture at present: Contemporary Vietnamese culture has the form of a colonial culture, and the content is the currency of capital.

The war and the trend of culture these days: the influence of fascist culture leads to a feudal characteristic, enslaves Vietnamese culture inside a stronger, but at the same time sustaining influence from a new democratic culture - that is the tendency is for a new Vietnamese culture, which is trying to overcome each obstacle in order to develop (illegal literature and art).

The Danger for Vietnamese Culture Under the Yoke of French-Japanese Fascism

1. Fascist tricks fetter culture and fatally injure Vietnamese culture.

a) French cultural policy:

- Repress democratic, revolutionary, anti-fascist writers and artists.
- Issue documents to establish organisations and cultural associations in order to stuff people's heads with untruths.
- Very heavily censor cultural materials.
- Entice and intimidate writers and artists.
- Close communication with religion in order to propagate medieval culture, ignoramus culture, and so on.
- Submissive propaganda, and a blind narrow-minded patriotism (chauvinism).
- Producing the outward appearance of nurturing an intellectual, physical and moral education for the people.

b) Cultural policy of the Japanese:

- Propaganda for the Greater East Asia ideology.
- Promote a view of Japan as the saviour of the yellow-skinned races, and Japanese culture as shedding rays of light, of civilisation, progress for all the races in Greater East Asia, etc etc...

- Seek every means to display and introduce Japanese culture (exhibitions, public speeches, establish tourist services, cultural institute, student exchanges, invite artists and writers from Indochina to visit Japan, start propaganda magazines, organise opera and movies ...).
- Suppress anti-Japanese writers and lure writers with ability.

2. The prospects for Vietnamese culture; two hypotheses:

- A fascist culture (medieval culture and enslavement) will win, then the popular culture of Vietnam will be poor, an inferior casualty.
- A Vietnamese national culture will, through a victorious democratic revolution of liberation, open the fetters and Vietnam will catch up with the new democratic cultures in the world.

Of these two hypotheses, which one will become fact? Based on the conditions of economics, politics and society these days, a Vietnamese national revolution will be resolved first to make the second hypotheses become fact.

The Matter of a Vietnamese Cultural Revolution⁴

1. The view of the Communists about the problem of a Vietnamese cultural revolution:

- a) Before we can complete a reconstruction of society we must complete a cultural revolution.
- b) The cultural revolution must be completed through the leadership of the Indochinese Communist Party.
- c) The cultural revolution can be completed when the political revolution is successful (the cultural revolution must go after the political revolution. The factors in cultural reform which are brought forward now are to clear the way for a thorough revolution later).

2. The culture, and even the Indochinese cultural revolution that must be completed will be based on a socialist culture.

3. The cultural revolution and the revolution of national liberation:

- a) The conditions for development of a cultural revolution in Vietnam will not occur unless the revolution is guided by a revolution of national liberation.

⁴ The translation of *cách mạng văn hóa* as “cultural revolution” is correct, but from this distance, the term “cultural revolution” can become confused with the quite different upheavals in China from 1966 to 1976.

b) A national liberation revolution in Vietnam can only in the luckiest circumstances carry Vietnamese culture to a democratic level and have the character of a complete national independence, therefore a new culture.

c) We must march on to complete a socialist revolution in Indochina, create and erect a new socialist culture all throughout Indochina.

4. Three principles exercising a national cultural movement in this stage:

a) Nationalisation (against all enslaving and colonial influences, leading to the development of an independent Vietnamese culture).

b) Popularisation (against all policies and actions for culture which oppose the great number of the masses, or are far from the great number of the masses).

c) Scientism (against all things which work for a culture contrary to science, which are anti-progressive).

We want the above principles to succeed, we must violently oppose cultural tendencies which are conservative, eclectic, eccentric, pessimistic, mystical, idealist, etc. But at the same time we must also oppose cultural tendencies that go too far towards the Trotskyites.

5. The properties of a new Vietnamese culture:

A new Vietnamese culture through the leadership of the Indochina Communist Party policy must not yet be a socialist culture or a soviet culture (as the culture of the Soviet Union, for example).

The new culture for Vietnam is a type of culture with the property that it is national in form, and newly democratic in content. For that very reason then, they are the most revolutionary and most progressive in Indochina at this time.

**Pressing Duties of Indochinese Marxist Writers and Artists and Especially
Vietnamese Marxist Writers and Artists.**

I. Immediate actions:

- fight against a culture which is fascist, feudal, regressive, enslaving, a culture which keeps the masses in ignorance and flatters the people.
- develop a new democratic Indochinese culture.

II. Work which must be done:

a) Campaign about doctrine, ideology (defeat mistaken views of European and Asian philosophy that have a more or less damaging influence on us: philosophies of Confucius, Mencius, Descartes, Bergson, Kant, Nietzsche, etc); work towards theories of dialectical materialism and historical materialism to win.

b) The struggle about literature and the arts (opposing classicism, romanticism, naturalism, symbolism, etc) is done so that a socialist realist tendency will win.

c) The struggle about spoken and written language:

1. Unification and increasing the richness of the spoken language;
2. Define the tricks of our literature.
3. Reform the national writing system, etc.

III Ways of Proceeding

a) Make full use of all public possibilities for publicity in order to:

1. Propagandise and publish.
2. Organise writers.
3. Endeavour to win the actual interests for writers, journalists, artists, etc.
4. Oppose the disaster of illiteracy, etc.

b) Tightly co-ordinate secret methods with public unification of every progressive cultural activity, under the right and leadership of the proletarian Marxist Party.

Appendix H

Translation of a Việt Minh Document

This translation has been made from a copy of a document obtained from the Library of the Peoples Army of Vietnam, the title page of which is shown at Illustration H-1.¹ The document is titled *Kinh nghiệm Việt Minh ở Việt Bắc* and Section IV of the document, which is translated here, deals with *tuyên truyền*, translated as “propaganda”, but see the comments in Chapter 1 about the differences between the English-language “propaganda” and the Vietnamese *tuyên truyền*. The document has also been reprinted in some collections of Communist Party documents,² but does not appear in the most recent republication of these documents.³



Illustration H-1: Title page of the document

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- ¹ *Kinh nghiệm Việt-minh ở Việt-bắc* (Originally published: 1945). Hà Nội: Tổng Bộ Việt Minh, 1946. (Copy in the author's collection), pp. 14-16.
 - ² See, for example, Đảng Cộng Sản Việt Nam Ương (Editorial Committee). *Văn Kiện Đảng 1930-1945 (Lưu Hành Nội Bộ) - Tập 3* [Party Documents 1930-1945 (For internal circulation) - Volume 3], Vol. 3 of 3. Hanoi: Ban Nghiên Cứu Lịch sử Đảng Trung Ương Xuất Bản, 1977, pp. 471-473. There is no publication date on this copy, but the copy in the Army Library indicates an initial publication in 1945.
 - ³ See, for example, *Văn Kiện Đảng Toàn Tập*. Vol. 7 (1940-1945) of 54. Hà Nội: NXB Chính Trị Quốc Gia, 2000 and *Văn Kiện Đảng Toàn Tập*. Vol. 8 (1945-1947) of 54. Hà Nội: NXB Chính Trị Quốc Gia, 2000.
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Translation of the Text

Experience of the *Việt Minh* in Northern Vietnam

IV Experience with Propaganda

On the propaganda side, in Northern Vietnam there was the newspaper *Independent Vietnam*, books, songs, exhibitions and the *Red Wind* propaganda team.

The newspaper VNDL⁴ was a small newspaper, written very simply, concise and easy to understand, very ordinary yet its influence was very great. It was, to some degree, the spirit of the organisations of national salvation in Northern Vietnam: wherever it went it spread revolutionary influence there, it was a credit to stable organisation there. It provided help for small groups to meet for discussion; it taught cadres great experience in their work, it provoked matters of revolutionary competition, it provoked a spirit of unity in associations; it criticised general defects of the regions, it raised high revolutionary examples for everyone to copy, it pressed for urgent work such as communications, self-defence... It was a clandestine newspaper sold for money, first in our country, yet also a clandestine newspaper most welcomed by the broad masses. The paper was published in 3 instalments each month and from one hundred copies each issue, increasing to 6 or 7 hundred, and it could increase more but had to be restricted because buying of ink and paper was very difficult. Members of the masses liked the newspaper very much, and contributed in great numbers - both with monetary contributions, and including thousands of lines.

The newspaper VNDL taught us a great lesson, that is written material for the masses must suit their level, must be universal, easily understood, concise. This special lesson had high value, because in our association, there are still comrades who continue to write articles for length, for a high level, to the extent that cadres can see, while not fully understanding, to nothing of the masses. Propaganda materials differ from published

⁴ The abbreviation “VNDL” for *Việt Nam Độc Lập* (“Independent Vietnam”) is used throughout the text. The newspaper *Việt Nam Độc Lập* is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

books in northern Vietnam, and also from newspapers such as VNDL which is based on following the needs and the level of the masses for writing.

Apart from the newspaper VNDL and books, the influence of songs is also worthy of special attention. Nothing is more quickly popular with the masses, nor excites them than singing. If a new song appears, then everyone learns it by heart, women, children, all learn it by heart. Very few young people who can read do not have copy-books of songs, and singing in local areas springs up like mushrooms. There are no conferences, no meetings, that close without eloquent and sad songs.

The Việt Minh organisation in northern Vietnam has organised a small exhibition of pictures including of the cruel Japanese enemy, and flags and banners of revolutionary organisations presented to us by other countries. Apart from these materials there is not very much else distinctive, but thanks to the method of organisation and skilful display, the exhibitions have become a demonstration of the people opposing the Japanese. If the exhibition teams arrive somewhere and open a meeting, it becomes quite lively.

The *Red Wind* propaganda team was only just organised in June 1943, and it has become famous. This is thanks to the skilful selection of propaganda programs, including speeches which are clear, intelligible, easy to understand, about urgent matters such as: why we must unite, asking where the revolution will be successful, when to rise up, how to oppose terror, preparation of armaments for the uprising, scorched earth, and one other item is the songs that are composed by the propaganda teams and are much loved, and in any cases where they are liked, the teams agree to “publish” immediately. But in the end it is due to the wide and generous organisation of the propaganda teams that they have that position and activity, and develop their influence.

Perhaps we can promote a way of propagating the names of past heroes and a way of publicising revolutionary terms. This way is to take the names of national heroes or revolutionary terms and make names for association members, for villages, for cantons, for districts, provinces, such as Bội Châu province, Trần Phú district, Quang Trung area,

Quảng Hoa Thám canton, Kháng Pháp mountain district, Ấu Triệu Highway⁵, Trọng Con Highway, etc.

Use any methods for propaganda, but the content of the propaganda should be limited to any of these several slogans, the whole people united, prepare arms for the uprising, fight the French, fight the Japanese, independent Vietnam. And always hold to your own experience of the masses, use methods which are easy to understand, so that you win them over, and trust the masses.

⁵ I am assuming that Đ.c stands for *Đường cái* “highway”.

Appendix I

French-Vietnamese Accord 6 March 1946

The following is the text of the Agreement made between the Government of France, represented by Jean Sainteny, and the Government of Vietnam, represented by President Hồ Chí Minh, on 6 March 1946.¹

Accord Franco-Vietnamien conclu le 6 mars 1946 **a [s/c] Hanoï**

Convention Préliminaire **Entre les Hautes Parties Contractantes** **Ci-après Désignées :**

Le Gouvernement de la République française, représentée par M. Sainteny, délégué du Haut-Commissaire de France, régulièrement mandaté par l'amiral d'Argenlieu, Haut-Commissaire de France, dépositaire des pouvoirs de la République française, d'une part :

Et le gouvernement du Viêt-nam, représenté par son président, M. Ho Chi Minh et la délégué spécial du conseil des ministres, M. Vu Hong Khanh, d'autre part ;

Il a été convenu ce qui suit :

1. Le gouvernement français reconnaît la République du Viêt-nam comme un État libre, ayant son gouvernement, son parlement, son armée et ses finances, faisant partie de la Fédération Indochinoise et de l'Union française.

En ce qui concerne la réunion des trois ky, le gouvernement français s'engage à entériner les décisions prises par la population consultée par *referendum*.

2. Le gouvernement du Viêt-nam se déclare prêt à accueillir amicalement l'armée française lorsque, conformément aux accords internationaux, elle relèvera les troupes chinoises.

Un accord annexe joint à la présente convention préliminaire fixera les modalités selon lesquelles s'effectueront les opérations de relève.

¹ Roger Lévy. *L'Indochine et Ses Traités 1946*. Paris: Centre d'Études de Politique Étrangère, Section d'Information, 1947, pp. 46-48.

3. Les stipulations ci-dessus formulées entreront immédiatement en vigueur.

Aussitôt après l'échange des signatures, chacune des hautes parties contractantes prends toutes mesures nécessaires pour faire cesser sur-le-champ les hostilités, maintenir les troupes sur leurs positions respectives et créer le climat favorable nécessaire à l'ouverture immédiate de négociations amicales et franches.

Ces négociations porteront notamment sur les relations diplomatiques du Viêt-nam avec les États étrangers ; le statut futur de l'Indochine; les intérêts économiques et culturels français au Viêt-nam.

Hanoï, Saïgon ou Paris pourront être choisis comme siège de la conférence.

Fait à Hanoï, le 6 mars 1946.

Signé : Sainteny.

Ho Chi Minh et Vu Hong Khanh

Texte de l'accord Annexe du 6 Mars 1946

Première Partie

Entre les Hautes Parties contractantes désignées à la convention préliminaire, il est convenu ce qui suit :

Primo. - Les forces de relève se composeront :

a) De 10.000 Vietnamiens avec leurs cadres vietnamiens relevant des autorités militaires du Viêt-nam.

b) De 15.000 Français, y compris les forces françaises résidant actuellement dans les territoires du Viêt-nam au nord du 16^e parallèle. Lesdits éléments devront être composés uniquement de Françaises d'origine métropolitaine, à l'exception des troupes chargées de la garde des prisonniers japonais.

L'ensemble de ces forces sera placé sous le commandement supérieur français, assisté de délégués vietnamiens.

La progression, l'implantation de ces forces seront définies au cours d'une conférence d'état-major entre les représentants des commandements français et vietnamien, laquelle se tiendra dès le débarquement des unités françaises.

Des commissions mixtes seront créées à tous les échelons pour assurer dans un esprit d'amicale collaboration la liaison entre les troupes françaises et les troupes vietnamiennes.

Secundo. - Les éléments français des troupes de relève seront répartis en trois catégories :

a) Les unités chargées d'assurer la garde des prisonniers de guerre japonais seront rapatriés, dès que leur mission sera devenue sans objet, par suite de l'évacuation des prisonniers japonais, en tout cas dans le délai maximum de 10 mois.

b) Les unités chargées d'assurer, en collaboration avec l'armée vietnamienne, le maintien de l'ordre public et la sécurité en territoire vietnamien. Ces unités seront relevées par cinquième chaque année par l'armée vietnamienne, cette relève étant donc effectivement réalisée dans un délai de cinq ans.

c) Les unités chargées d'assurer des bases aériennes et navales. La durée de la mission confiée à ces unités sera définie dans les conférences ultérieures.

Tertio. - Dans les places où les troupes françaises et vietnamiennes tiendront garnison, des zones de cantonnement nettement délimitées leur seront assignées.

Quarto. - Le gouvernement français s'engage à ne pas utiliser les Japonais à des fins militaires.

Fait à Hanoï, le 6 mars 1946.

Sainteny, Ho Chi Minh, Vu Hong Khanh

**Franco-Vietnamese agreement signed March 6, 1946
at Hanoi**

**Preliminary agreement
Between the High Contracting Parties
Declare the following:**

The Government of the French Republic, represented by Mr. Sainteny, delegate of the High Commissioner of France, properly authorised by Admiral d'Argenlieu, High Commissioner of France, in who resides the sovereign powers of the French Republic, on the one hand:

And the Government of Vietnam, represented by its president, Ho Chi Minh and the special delegate of the Council of Ministers, Mr. Vu Hong Khanh, on the other;

It was agreed that:

1. The French government recognises the Republic of Vietnam as a free state, with its own government, parliament, army and finances, belonging to the Indochinese Federation and French Union.

Regarding the unification of the three ky [Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina],² the French government agrees to endorse the decisions taken by the people consulted by referendum.

2. The Government of Vietnam declares itself ready to welcome the friendly French army when, according to international regulations, it will relieve Chinese troops.

An ancillary agreement attached to this preliminary agreement will set the terms under which it will make relief operations.

3. The stipulations formulated above will be effective immediately.

² Bắc Kỳ, Trung Kỳ, Nam Kỳ.

Immediately from the exchange of signatures, each of the high contracting parties take all necessary measures to stop hostilities immediately, to keep troops in their respective positions and to create a climate necessary for the immediate opening of friendly and frank negotiations.

These negotiations will include the diplomatic relations of Vietnam with foreign states; the future status of Indochina, the French cultural and economic interests in Vietnam.

Hanoi, Saigon or Paris may be selected to host the conference.

Done in Hanoi, March 6, 1946.

Signed: Sainteny.

Ho Chi Minh and Vu Hong Khanh

Text of the agreement of March 6, 1946 Appendix Part One

Between the High Contracting Parties named in the preliminary agreement, it is agreed as follows:

First. - The relieving forces will comprise:

a) 10,000 Vietnamese with their Vietnamese cadres under military control of Vietnam.

b) 15,000 French, including French forces currently residing in the territories of Vietnam north of 16th parallel. Such elements must be made up entirely of French metropolitan origin, with the exception of troops to guard Japanese prisoners.

All these forces will be under the supreme French command, assisted by Vietnamese representatives.

The advance, stationing and employment of these forces will be defined during a conference of staff between the representatives of French and Vietnamese commands, which will be held at the landing of the French units.

Joint commissions will be created at all levels to ensure a spirit of friendly cooperation liaison between the French and Vietnamese troops.

Second. - The elements of French relieving troops will be divided into three categories:

a) The units responsible for the custody of Japanese prisoners of war shall be repatriated as soon as their mission is completed, following following the evacuation of Japanese prisoners, in any case within a maximum period of 10 months.

b) The units responsible for providing, in collaboration with the Vietnamese army, maintaining public order and security in Vietnamese territory. A fifth of these units will be relieved by the Vietnamese army each year, so this relief will be effectively completed within five years.

c) The units responsible for providing defence for air and naval bases. The duration of the mission entrusted to these units will be defined in subsequent conferences.

Third. - In places where the French and Vietnamese troops are stationed, cantonment areas will be sharply defined to which they will be assigned.

Fourth. - The French Government undertakes not to use the Japanese forces for military purposes.

Done in Hanoi, March 6, 1946.

Sainteny, Ho Chi Minh, Vu Hong Khanh

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Colophon

This thesis was prepared on a computer running the Debian 6 operating system and using OpenOffice 3 and LibreOffice 3.5 as the word-processing applications. The fonts employed are from the “UVN” series of Unicode (UTF-8) encoded fonts. These fonts were especially developed for written Vietnamese and are particularly well-adapted for the diacritics in that language. Spell-checking for the Vietnamese language portions of the thesis was done by use of the OpenOffice Vietnamese plug-in.

The bibliography was produced using Endnote 9 running on a Windows XP computer and the same computer was used for the Filemaker Pro 9 databases used to marshal the collected information about posters and other items.

All photographs were taken on Nikon digital cameras. Because of the difficulties associated with photographing in museums and libraries, some of the photographs required perspective correction and cropping. These adjustments were done using The Gimp (version 2.6.10) on the Debian system.